



"Because Not All Radio Stations Are Created Equal"

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**(Regional)-U. S. Fish And Wildlife Service Offers Tips In Celebration Of Earth Day 2013**

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 04/22/2013 12:40 PM

(REGIONAL)-Monday is Earth Day, and this year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is encouraging individuals to take action in their communities by providing 20 simple Eco Tips. There are plenty of ways to get involved, whether individually, or with families and friends at home, in the neighborhood, or at school. Plant a tree, pick up litter, remove invasive plants, clean-up a beach or along a river...You can also help create bird habitats and prevent bird injuries; protect pollinators; Reduce, Reuse, Recycle...the opportunities are endless!

The Fish and Wildlife Service says every day can be Earth Day. The earth and its inhabitants benefit from small positive choices that are put into action by communities wanting to make a difference.

**1) Volunteer**

Imagine banding birds at a National Wildlife Refuge, raising fish at a National Fish Hatchery, conducting wildlife surveys, leading a tour or restoring fragile habitat. With close to 42,000 volunteers contributing in excess of 1.5 million hours, our volunteers perform a wide variety of tasks. [Our volunteers are individuals](#) who want to give back to their communities, parents who want to be good stewards of the land and set examples for their children, retired people willing to share their wealth of knowledge, concerned citizens of all ages who want to learn more about conservation and passionate people who enjoy the outdoors and want to spread the word about America's greatest natural treasures.

**2) Plant native**

[How 'green' is your garden?](#) Well, now may be the time to ensure that it is truly sustainable. You can order seeds of wildflowers native to your region that will give you low-maintenance blooms next spring and all summer long. Not only will they thrive, they'll support native birds, insects and other pollinators that depend on familiar, home-grown species for a healthy ecosystem.

**3) Create schoolyard habitat**

[Schoolyard habitat](#) helps teachers and students create wildlife habitat on school grounds. Habitat is the collective term for the food, water, shelter and nursery areas that all wildlife needs to survive. The loss of habitat is one of the greatest threats facing wildlife today. Many habitat features can be added to an existing site, such as a garden, wetland pond, or nesting boxes.

--**Gardens:** A wide range of gardens are possible. Planned garden areas should be included in the school design.

--**Signs:** Identify projects with signs to help with community recognition. Signs will help publicize the project and can help offset complaints about the wild appearance of natural habitats.

--**Trails:** Trails should be an integral part of any project. Make sure wheelchair access is incorporated into trail design. A nature trail could eventually wind throughout the entire schoolyard.

**4) Pick-up litter**

Don't litter. Trash tossed carelessly outside washes into storm drains, which empty into rivers and streams that eventually flow to the oceans. Trash adversely affects the habitat of [marine and other aquatic environments](#), causing death and injury to seabirds, fish, marine mammals, turtles and other species through swallowing and entanglement. Common litter includes plastic bags, paper, candy wrappers, fast-food packaging, bottle caps, glass bottles, plastic six-pack rings and plastic straws. Spend one hour picking up litter. Organize a team of family, friends, or co-workers to pick up litter in your local neighborhood, wildlife refuge or park. Enjoy making a difference, getting exercise, getting to know people better and having cleaner surroundings.

## 5) Prevent stormwater runoff

[Poor water quality](#) can harm fish, wildlife and their habitat. Many things are known to cause poor water quality, including sedimentation, runoff, erosion and pesticides. Stormwater runoff occurs when rainfall flows over the ground. Stormwater runoff picks up debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants from hard (impervious) surfaces and washes them into storm drains. Anything that enters a storm drain flows often untreated into the rivers and streams that we use for swimming and drinking water. How you can help:

- All vehicle fluids are toxic and extremely harmful to the environment. Recycle used oil in a clean, sealed, plastic container.
- SWEEP! Hosing off pavements washes pollutants into storm drains leading straight to the river.
- Deliver old paint, pesticides, solvents and batteries to your local hazardous waste drop-off facilities. Pouring hazardous substances down a storm drain, onto the ground or into a stream creates a danger to all, as well as the environment.
- Street litter, such as styrofoam, plastic, and paper can be prevented from blowing into inlets by keeping trash bins covered and by not littering.
- Yard waste, such as grass clippings, tree trimmings and leaves can be composted and used for fertilizer around the yard.

## 6) Protect pollinators

Each year we celebrate National Pollinator Week in recognition of the [importance of pollinator species](#) to agriculture, forest and grassland environments and other ecosystems. There is increasing evidence that many pollinators are in decline. However, there are some simple things you can do at home to encourage pollinator diversity and abundance, such as planting a pollinator garden. Consider the following when [choosing plants](#) for your garden:

- Choose native plants that flower at different times of the year to provide nectar and pollen sources throughout the growing season
- Plant in clumps, rather than single plants, to better attract pollinators
- Provide a variety of flower colors and shapes to attract different pollinators
- Contact your [local or state native plant society](#) for help.

## 7) Reduce bird strikes

The Audubon Society estimates that in the United States and Canada, as many as 1 billion birds die each year due to collisions with windows in homes and modern office buildings that often use insulated and reflective glass. The primary cause of birds colliding with glass is due to reflection. When birds become confused or startled they see escape routes and possible safety zones mirrored in reflective glass and fly unaware into windows. There are many ways to [reduce bird strikes](#) at windows. Objects or ornaments hanging in windows will reduce the reflection by breaking it up. Hang ribbons or other material in strips no more than five centimeters apart on the outside of windows for the full width of the glass. Keep houseplants away from windows as they can appear like trees.

## 8) Clean up pet waste

[Clean up after your pet](#) to reduce pollution in local water bodies. Poor water quality can harm fish, wildlife and their habitat. Pet waste left behind may be washed into waterways by rain or melting snow, carrying disease-causing organisms that make water unsafe for swimming or drinking. Water that drains off of agricultural sites and into surrounding ponds or ditches can cause the build-up of toxins in shorebirds, waterfowl and fish. What should you do with waste you pick up? There is no perfect answer, but here are a couple options:

- Pick it up and flush it down a toilet.
- Put it in a plastic bag and throw it in the garbage can (just make sure the bags do not have any holes and are tied tightly.)

## 9) Avoid cat predation

There are more than 90 million pet cats in the United States, the majority of which roam outside at least part of the time. [Cat predation](#) is an added stress to wildlife populations already struggling to survive habitat loss, pollution, pesticides and other human impacts. Cats are a serious threat to fledglings, birds roosting at night and birds on a nest. Research shows that declawing cats and bell collars do not prevent them from killing birds and other small animals. For healthy cats and wild birds, cats should not be allowed to roam free. Also, spay or neuter your cats before they can produce an unwanted litter, and never abandon cats you cannot care for.

## 10) Let's Go Outside

["Let's Go Outside"](#) strives to promote environmental awareness while reconnecting Americans with nature,

encouraging healthier lifestyles and helping to ensure future generations will appreciate the natural world around them. Let's Go Outside encourages children, educators and parents to get outside and enjoy nature and wildlife. Experiencing nature can be as simple as visiting a local wildlife refuge, state park, bird watching in your own backyard or even taking a walk around the neighborhood to see wildlife. Watching wildlife is an extremely easy, fun and free way to enjoy the environment, spend family time or just to relax.

### **11) Family Tips**

Are you and your family eco-friendly? There are lots of easy things you can do in your own homes, neighborhoods and at school every day to help save our earth, air and water. So, celebrate the Earth Day holiday by learning new ways to protect the environment together.

### **12) While at home**

- Don't put hazardous substances down the drain or in the trash. Things like paint thinner, furniture polish, and antifreeze can pollute our water and land, impacting people as well as wildlife.
- Keep litter, pet wastes and leaves out of street gutters and storm drains.
- Recycle everything you can: newspapers, scrap papers, cans, glass, motor oil, plastics, appliances, etc.
- Don't leave water running. Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth or washing your face. Install water-saving devices, such as low-flow showerheads, to save water and save money.
- Turn the lights and TV off when you leave a room. Use energy-efficient light bulbs.

### **13) In your community**

- Support natural areas and nature centers near you. Work with community members to maintain and restore habitat.
- Walk, ride your bike, carpool or use public transportation. Organize litter cleanups and recycling drives.
- Plant native trees and bushes with berries or nuts that provide birds and other creatures with food and a place to live.
- At school, ask your teachers to help you organize clean-up days. Remove trash or invasive weeds from vacant lots or streams.

### **14) Going on vacation?**

- Turn the heat down and turn off the water heater before leaving home.
- Don't pick flowers or collect wild creatures for pets. Leave animals and plants where you find them.
- Going abroad? Think twice about the things you buy. Travelers don't realize that several U.S. laws and an [international treaty](#) make it a crime to bring many wildlife souvenirs into our country.

### **15) Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**

Recycling turns materials that would otherwise become waste into valuable resources. Collecting used bottles, cans and newspapers and taking them to the curb or to a collection facility is just the first in a series of steps that generates a host of financial, environmental and social returns.

- Reuse glass and plastic bottles as planters by filling them with dirt and planting herbs or vegetables for your own indoor garden. Large coffee cans, empty milk jugs, old clay planter pots and plastic buckets can all be used successfully as plant containers.
- Newspaper can be used to wrap birthday gifts or crumple newspaper to create packaging material to keep items protected when shipping. Reuse plastic bags to line trashcans or to pick up pet waste. Avoid purchasing items that are over packaged.
- Paper or Plastic? How about a reusable tote? They are inexpensive and help to reduce the production of plastic and paper bags. Opt for a reusable water bottle as opposed to one-time-use plastic bottles.

### **16) Prevent contaminants**

[Contaminants](#) are any physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substance or matter that has an adverse effect on air, water or soil. Contaminants enter the environment in many different ways, such as from disposal of municipal wastes, factory discharges and oil or chemical spills. In many cases, the origin of pollution may not be as clear. Pollutants can also be carried for long distances through the air and deposited on land and in water by rain.

### **17) Plant a tree**

Arbor Day is a nationally-celebrated observance that encourages tree planting and care. It's celebrated on the last Friday in April. This year, celebrate Arbor Day by planting a tree. Trees in your backyard and neighborhood can be home to many different types of wildlife. Trees can also reduce your heating and cooling costs, help clean the air, add beauty and color and provide shelter from the wind and the sun. Tree roots stabilize soil, prevent erosion and improve water quality by slowing and filtering rain water. Trees also play an important role in

protecting fish habitat by offering shelter under streamside roots and branches and shade from the sun by cooling the water.

### **18) Create bird habitat**

As you learn to enjoy the beauty of birdlife around their home, you may wish to [improve the habitat](#) in your yard so that more birds will visit your property. You can attract birds by placing bird feeders, nest boxes and bird baths in your yard, and by planting a variety of trees, shrubs and flowers. These can provide good nesting sites, winter shelter, places to hide from predators and natural food supplies that are available year-round. If you put out [bird feeders](#), select a safe feeder and keep it clean. You should consider the location of the feeder, and whether you need to “squirrel proof.” Remember, a source of fresh water is especially important in the spring and summer. Bird baths will be used for both bathing and drinking.

### **19) Prevent invasive plants**

[Invasive plants](#) displace naturally occurring vegetation and, in the process, upset nature’s balance and diversity. Helping to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plants is the most effective way of protecting healthy, non-infested ecosystems. Here are just a few tips:

- Ask for only non-invasive species when you acquire plants. Plant only environmentally safe species in your gardens. Work towards and promote new landscape design that is friendly to regional ecosystems.
- Find information on which species are invasive in your area. Sources could include botanical gardens, horticulturists, conservationists and government agencies.
- Remove invasive species from your land and replace them with non-invasive species suited to your site and needs.
- Seek the best information on control of invasive plant species and organize neighborhood work groups to remove invasive plant species under the guidance of knowledgeable professionals.

### **20) Earth Day is Every Day**

Celebrate Earth Day on April 22nd and every day. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would like you to consider doing something to make a better planet for fish, wildlife and their habitat. Take action on Earth Day and every day by visiting <http://www.fws.gov/>.

--U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service