

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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You can attract or discourage birds from taking up residence near your home or farmstead by altering the surrounding environment. The publication *Managing Iowa Wildlife: Problem Birds Around Homes and Farmsteads PM-1302d* thoroughly covers how people can attract birds to their backyards with plantings and feeders. However, these methods can also attract unwanted birds. Sometimes we must look around and see what else may attract birds. For instance, on a farmstead, birds may be attracted to feedlots and stored grain. It may be necessary to take steps to make these areas less attractive. To effectively control unwanted birds, you need to understand what the bird's daily requirements are and then remove or exclude these requirements from them.

To survive, all birds need habitat which is made up of four essential elements: space, food, shelter and water. By manipulating these factors you can attract and maintain desirable birds and discourage problem ones. Each bird species has a preference for different amounts of space. But altering space alone will not have much effect on control. Pay attention to food, water and shelter as well, in order to more effectively control bird populations.

Common food sources for birds include seeds, fruits, berries and insects. To reduce the number of problem birds will require eliminating or controlling access to a food source. For instance, you can reduce the number of undesirable birds around homes by choosing plants that do not produce edible nuts, fruits and berries or by changing the type of food offered in bird feeders. Around the farmstead, protect food sources such as grain and feed.

All birds need shelter for cover, roosting and nesting. The kind of shelter a bird will use varies with the season, the species of bird, and the reason the bird is looking for shelter. On farms, birds like to roost in places that provide them easy access to a source of food, such as livestock feed or grain. When birds nest in inappropriate places, be persistent about removing their nests. A more long term solution is to either exclude the birds from the area or make the area less comfortable for them. Netting and sticky repellants can be used to prevent birds from nesting or roosting on ledges and rafters or under eaves.

A source of water is essential for birds year round and can attract problem birds to areas like feedlots and grain storage. In rural areas, drain unnecessary water from troughs, junk piles, ruts or low spots in the barnyard. Water level in water troughs should be low enough that the bird is unable to reach it while perched on the edge yet deep enough so they cannot stand in it.

For more detailed information about controlling unwanted birds, read publication Pm 1302d on ISU's website: www.extension.iastate.edu/ or contact the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.

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