



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Why is there an absence or reduction of birds in my area?

While it is hard to say for sure what has caused the birds to leave your area here are a few things to consider:

1. We know the number of birds overall is declining from a variety of environmental stressors, but we do not usually see an acute loss of birds from one specific neighborhood. Rather the number of birds found during our routine surveys decreases over a period of time.
2. Migration patterns are changing. Everything from widespread fires in the West to El Nino and La Nina can affect the patterns, making birds which were once common appear less frequently in certain areas and vice versa. For example, this spring saw record numbers of American Robins in areas which don't normally see such huge flocks.
3. Other weather factors are being seen right now - record high temperatures into December across many states and our fluctuation between freezing and almost 80 degree temps over the last few weeks have allowed birds to stay further north and use other food sources - especially omnivores like American Robins.
4. Even birds who don't migrate long distance will move around seasonally. Short-distance migrators and juveniles seeking new territory may leave your area before being replaced by birds from other areas.
5. Food sources might change. The freeze in spring caused many of our native plants to produce bumper crops of fruits and nuts. Many birds are taking advantage of this bounty. Yaupon are longer-lasting so birds may leave them for later in the season when other sources are exhausted.
6. Predator activity – young and migrating hawks or owls, feral cats, or even new dogs in the neighborhood can affect how birds use feeders.
7. Localized disturbances – construction, removal of trees and shrubs, removal of a water source, etc. can have an effect on the number of birds in your neighborhood.

Obviously many of these factors are out of our control. We can suggest a few courses of action.

1. Patience. Predators move on or birds get used to them, the natural food sources run out, that pile of corn your neighbor spilled finally gets carried away by the squirrels.
2. Remove places for predators to hide/give birds places to hide. Make sure your feeders are positioned where birds can see danger coming but also close enough to dense foliage they can hide in. If your feeders have been in the same spot for a long time consider if trees have grown over them or other plants have encroached or been removed.
3. Water. Birds can hear moving water from a long distance, even from migrating high above. Adding a drip or bubbler can make your yard attractive.
4. Novelty and variety - since you don't use feeders, adding some other types of native plant might bring birds back to your yard.

For more ideas and details check out [www.birdfriendlyhouston.org](http://www.birdfriendlyhouston.org)