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One of the joys of living in our Desert Foothills is being able to enjoy the plentiful wildlife that our lush Sonoran Desert supports. If you have left the natural vegetation in your yard, you find yourself surrounded by many small residents. This natural vegetation is very important for providing food and shelter for the wildlife.

Water can be provided in a shallow pond or dish. The pond should be no deeper than 2 inches and should have tapered sides so the birds can get in and out easily. A slow, steady drip to the pool will attract birds more readily than still water. A rock or group of rocks can be added to provide additional footing. The pool should be located near a bush, as birds and small animals feel more secure if there is nearby cover. If it is placed in partial or filtered shade, the water will not become over-heated in summer and will not evaporate as rapidly.

Ground-feeding birds, such as black-throated and white-crowned sparrows, doves and Gambel's quail, can be attracted by scattering chicken scratch or wild bird seed on the ground in an area where there is nearby cover. An elevated platform or feeder can be filled with wild bird seed and sunflower seeds to attract perching birds such as cardinals, finches and towhees.

Hummingbird feeders, filled with four-parts water and one-part sugar, will attract hummingbirds, verdins, orioles and Gila woodpeckers. The water and sugar should be boiled before filling the feeder. Please do not use honey, artificial sweeteners or red food coloring.

If you attract wildlife by the above methods, be aware that this will attract birds in greater numbers than the natural habitat would allow. The congregation of birds perching around a

feeder may make them an easy target for natural predators. The predator can not be blamed. He is doing what nature has programmed him to do: control an overabundant population.

As the birds become used to your daily presence, they will lose their natural fear of man. In a sense, they will become almost tame. This can be an increased danger for them. The birds will become dependent on the food that you provide. Thus, once you start, you must continue your practice. You must be reliable and responsible in your feeding schedule. If you leave for the summer, or go on vacation, the sudden absence of food and water may cause a hardship for the wildlife. If you plan to discontinue feeding, taper the amounts off very gradually so the birds can readjust and again revert to their natural sources of food.

Another way to attract wildlife to your yard is to plant those native shrubs and trees that will attract them. Chuparosa is an attractive shrub, bearing bright red flowers that will attract hummingbirds, finches and orioles. The false mesquite or fairy duster is a low shrub with acacia-like leaves that attracts deer. Quail and white-winged doves love the seeds.

Different parts of the prickly pear plant are taken by at least 44 kinds of animals. In fact, prickly pear ranks as one of the most important woody plants for wildlife in the nation. Birds also enjoy the berries of the tomatillo, lemonade sumac and pyracantha. These are just a few of the many plants that will attract wildlife. More detailed information on plants that attract birds can be obtained through the Desert Botanical Garden, or write: Conservation Committee, Box 434, Cave Creek, Ariz. 85331.