NATIONAL WILDLIFE WEEK

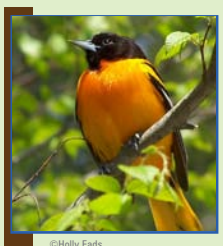
MARCH 18-24, 2013 WWW.NWF.ORG/WILDLIFEWEEK

# Branching Out for Wildlife

*Trees and Their Value for Wildlife and People*

Yucca Moth ©Cesar Torres; Nothern Spotted Owl ©Tania Thomson; Beaver ©fotofactory / Shutterstock.com; Tree ©IvanNikulin / Shutterstock.com.

## LEAVES, FRUIT, FLOWERS



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### BALTIMORE ORIOLE

***Scientific Name:*** *Icterus galbula*

***Description:*** Baltimore orioles are easily recognized by their brilliant orange and black plumage. They feed on insects, fruit, and flowers high in the trees. Baltimore oriole nests are quite extraordinary—their sock-shaped nests hang securely from branches in the leafy upper canopy, thanks to an intricate tangle of nest material knotted together by the females. American elms are a favorite nesting site of Baltimore orioles, but nests are also built in maples and cottonwoods.

***U.S. Habitat and Range:*** Treetops in open deciduous woodlands are the primary habitats of Baltimore orioles. They are also easily attracted to backyards with native plants and bird feeders. They are present up and down the east coast and west from Montana to Texas.

***Fun Fact:*** The Baltimore oriole is named for the English Baltimore family, whose crest is colored similarly to the bird.

***Conservation Status:*** Baltimore orioles are stable, but their biggest threat is deforestation.

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### CEDAR WAXWING

***Scientific Name:*** *Bombycilla cedrorum*

***Description:*** Cedar waxwings are beautiful songbirds with vibrant yellow bellies and brown to gray bodies. They specialize in fruit eating, sometimes eating so many over ripened berries that they become intoxicated! The "cedar" part of their name comes from their favorite food, the cedar berry, and the "waxwing" part of their name comes from bright-red waxy wingtips.

***U.S. Habitat and Range:*** Cedar waxwings are found year round in the northern half of the U.S. and are seen in the southern states during winter. They usually inhabit woodlands, but they readily venture into backyards with fruit-producing trees and shrubs.

***Fun Fact:*** A male cedar waxwing courts a female by giving her a gift such as a berry or flower petal.

***Conservation Status:*** Increasing, partly due to the use of berry-producing trees in landscaping and the conversion of agricultural land to forest.

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### DOUGLAS-FIR

***Scientific Name:*** *Pseudotsuga menziesii*

***Description:*** Douglas-firs are large evergreen conifers, meaning that they keep their needle-like leaves year round and they produce seeds in cones. The seeds provide food for small mammals. Mountain beaver, deer, elk and rabbits eat the foliage and twigs. Many songbirds eat the seeds, and raptors rely on old-growth forests of Douglas-fir for cover.

***U.S. Habitat and Range:*** Rocky Mountain Douglas-firs, the inland variety, grow in the mountains of the Pacific Northwest and the Rocky Mountains. They are much more cold tolerant than coast Douglas-fir, which is suited to moist, mild climates on the west coast.

***Fun Fact:*** Many people are familiar with Douglas-firs, because they are one of several species used as Christmas trees!

***Conservation Status:*** Douglas-firs are a stable species that aren't in danger of extinction. However, when the trees are cut down, rare wildlife species like spotted owls lose valuable habitat.

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### JAMAICAN FRUIT-EATING BAT

***Scientific Name:*** *Artibeus jamaicensis*

***Description:*** Jamaican fruit-eating bats are a species of leaf-nosed bat characterized by a leaf-like protrusion on their snout. Although capable of using echolocation, Jamaican fruit-eating bats rely on their vision and sense of smell to find food. They feed mostly on brightly colored, fragrant fruits, especially figs. Jamaican fruit-eating bats carry their food to feeding roosts before consuming it, which makes them great dispersers of seeds.

***U.S. Habitat and Range:*** Jamaican fruit-eating bats are mostly found in humid tropical forests, but they also live in drier areas and even frequent human-modified habitats in the Florida Keys, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

***Fun Fact:*** Jamaican fruit-eating bats build unusual roost sites. They chew along the veins of a broad leaf, causing it to fold over in a tent-like fashion. These tent roosts are used during the day to protect the bats from sun, rain, and predators.

***Conservation Status:*** Stable.

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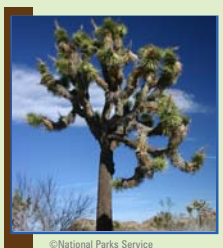

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### JOSHUA TREE

***Scientific Name:*** *Yucca brevifolia*

***Description:*** Joshua trees aren't actually trees—they're succulents, a type of plant that stores water. In their dry ecosystems, however, they are considered trees of the desert! Joshua trees usually have a single trunk with branches that end in clusters of spiky leaves and white, rounded flowers. Many mammals, lizards and other animals rely on the Joshua tree for food, cover and nesting sites, including 25 species of birds.

***U.S. Habitat and Range:*** Joshua trees are most commonly found in the Mojave Desert in the southwestern U.S. These "trees" are such a striking feature of the desert landscape that there is a national park dedicated to them in California!

***Fun Fact:*** Joshua trees were named for the biblical figure Joshua by 19th century Mormon settlers who felt that the outstretched tree limbs guided them along in their westward journey.

***Conservation Status:*** Because they require a cold period to flower, Joshua trees are vulnerable to climate change.

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### RED TREE VOLE

***Scientific Name:*** *Arborimus longicaudus*

***Description:*** Red tree voles are a truly arboreal species, which is highly unusual for a vole. Many of these small reddish-brown rodents spend their lives nesting in the canopy of Douglas-fir trees, rarely finding reasons to come down. Needles—the leaves of fir trees—make up almost the entire diet of red tree voles. These voles find their water source by licking moisture off the surfaces of fir needles.

***U.S. Habitat and Range:*** Red tree voles are found in Western Oregon, primarily in wet, old-growth forests dominated by Douglas-fir, grand fir, Sitka spruce, and western hemlock trees.

***Fun Fact:*** Nests of red tree voles are very complex! They are constantly added to by successive generations and consist of areas for eating and using the bathroom, as well as escape routes.

***Conservation Status:*** Red tree voles are vulnerable to habitat loss from logging of their forested homes.

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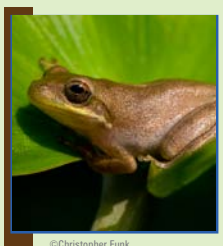

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### SQUIRREL TREEFROG

***Scientific Name:*** *Hyla squirella*

***Description:*** Squirrel treefrogs aren't named for their nimble treetop maneuvers but for their chattering, squirrel-like calls produced during and after rainstorms. The sticky discs on their toes help them cling to slippery leaves, and their color-changing abilities camouflage them in the forest. These nocturnal frogs sleep in trees during the day and hunt insects and spiders at night.

***U.S. Habitat and Range:*** Squirrel treefrogs are found in the southeast from Virginia to Florida and west to Texas. They prefer habitat with trees and plenty of moisture, such as swamps, marshes, and riverbanks.

***Fun Fact:*** Squirrel treefrogs run along roofs in addition to treetops, and the energetic hoppers may occasionally leap down uncovered chimneys.

***Conservation Status:*** Stable. Like most amphibians, squirrel tree frogs lay their eggs in shallow pools to undergo a larval stage before reaching adulthood. Keeping waterways clean of pollutants helps to promote frog conservation.

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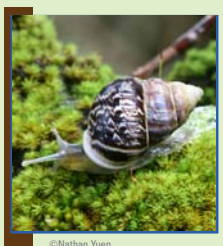

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### KĀHULI TREE SNAILS

***Scientific Name:*** *Achatinella* spp.

***Description:*** Kāhuli tree snails—Hawaiian jewels of the forest—are tiny mollusks with colorful, elongated shells. They are found in Hawai'i on native trees and shrubs, where they eat fungi that cling to the surface of leaves. For their size, kāhuli are very long-lived, with some of them reaching over 10 years in age!

***U.S. Habitat and Range:*** Kāhuli tree snails are endemic, or unique, to the forests of Hawai'i.

***Fun Fact:*** Kāhuli tree snails were once so plentiful that they were featured in traditional Hawaiian chants. According to folklore, kāhuli tree snails are singing snails that call to golden plovers, a native seabird, to bring them dew collected from Hawaiian ferns!

***Conservation Status:*** When they were more abundant, kāhuli tree snails were collected for their beautiful shells to make leis. This led to the decline of many species, but the biggest threat to the snails right now is nonnative predators, such as rats, carnivorous snails, and Jackson's chameleons. All of the 42 "kāhuli" species in the genus (group) *Achatinella* are found only on the island of O'ahu and are either endangered or extinct.

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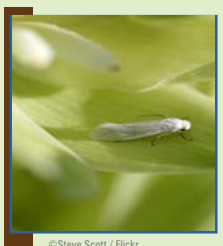

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### YUCCA MOTHS

***Scientific Name:*** *Tegeticula* spp.

***Description:*** Most yucca moths have white wings to blend in with the creamy blossoms of the yucca plants they pollinate. One such plant is the Joshua tree, which is absolutely dependent on these tiny insects for survival. The female moths use tentacles around their mouths to gather up pollen from one flower and bring it to another. At this second flower, they deposit pollen on the stigma so that the fertilized plant will produce fruit and seeds. The moths also deposit their eggs in this flower, and when the eggs hatch, they have a ready supply of food to eat!

***U.S. Habitat and Range:*** Yucca moths are found throughout the Southwest U.S. wherever there are yuccas.

***Fun Fact:*** Many insects pollinate flowers passively when feeding on nectar. Yucca moths spread pollen deliberately to ensure their offspring's survival.

***Conservation Status:*** Stable. Conserving yucca plants like the Joshua tree is the key to their survival.

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