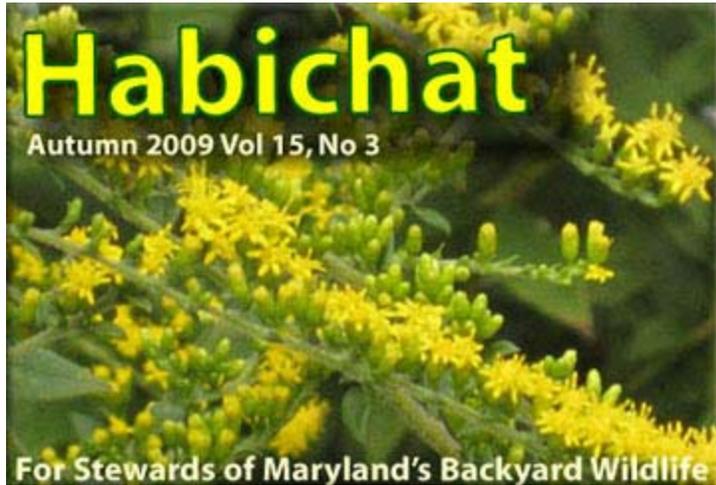


Maryland's Wild Acres



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HABITAT - the arrangement of food, water, cover, and
space - IS THE KEY.

Native Plant Profile... Goldenrod (Solidago)

Family: Aster

Flower: Generally yellow, ranging from lemon yellow to butter yellow. There are a few species that are white, (Silverrod, *S. bicolor*). Flowers are small yellow-rayed blossoms massed in clusters.

Leaves: Long and narrow some species have smooth edges some are toothed. They can also be feathered-veined or parallel-veined.

Height: 1 to 5 feet depending on species

Bloom: July to October

Fruit: Small, dry seed covered by fuzz that allows it to become air-born

Form: Most Goldenrods can be placed in the following categories:

- clublike, showy
- elm-branched
- flat-topped,
- plumelike, or
- wandlike, slender

Soil: Species are found in all types of soil, wet to dry, poor to rich

Sun: Most Goldenrod species prefer sun, there are some that will grow in partial shade (ZigZag Goldenrod, *S. flexicaulis*) (Anise Scented Goldenrod, *S. odora*)

Habitat: Roadsides, thickets, clearings, fields and open woods.

Propagation in the Wild: Seed and can spread by rhizomes producing the classic clumps of Goldenrods most people view in the outdoors.

Identification of Goldenrods: Very diverse, hybridizes frequently, making identification challenging. It is helpful to look at the form of the plant and leaves when deciding what species you are viewing.



Canada goldenrod
Solidago canadensis var *scabra*



Canada goldenrod
Solidago canadensis L.

Wildlife Value: Research in N.Y. has shown that 138 species of insects rely on goldenrod for food, shelter and reproduction. Forty species of Gall Flies lay their eggs in goldenrod stems. Praying Mantis rely on Goldenrod as plants to lay eggs on and hatchlings hide in clubs of the plants. Although the flowers are small they bloom in mass, providing an essential nectar source for many beneficial insects in late summer and fall. Insect eating songbirds will prey upon insects attracted to the flowers. The following birds will consume the seeds: Carolina Chickadee, Goldfinch, Junco, Tree Sparrow, and Downy Woodpecker. Butterflies such as Monarchs, Hair-Streaks and Painted Ladies are frequent visitors to the plants. White-throated Sparrows will use clumps of goldenrods as shelter.

Did you know? *Solidago* means to make whole, a reference to goldenrod used in herbal medicine for a variety of ailments. In the early part of the 20th century goldenrod was nominated to be our national flower since it is found over most of the U.S. Goldenrod does not cause hay fever! It does bloom the same time as ragweeds, the plants that do cause the problem. The pollen of goldenrod, heavy and sticky is carried by insects and is not air-born. There are over 60 species of *Solidago* found in North America.

Remember if you decide to plant goldenrods for your late summer- fall garden, purchase plants from nurseries that propagate what they sell.

Maryland Wildlife: Eastern Cottontail Rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

The most common rabbit found in the wild in the eastern United States is the Eastern Cottontail.

Size: Length of adults is 14 ½" to 18 ¼", long ears are 2" to 2 ¾", white cotton looking tail is 1 ½". Hind Foot is about 4" long.

Weight: 2 to 4 pounds

General description: Dark brown, mixed with gray is the overall color of the fur. Rabbits molt in the spring to a brown color, and in October molt into a fur that contains a mixture of gray and brown. They have a short tail that is white below with the top brown. All under parts of the animal are white. Sexes and young are the same coloration except young have shorter ears and have a yellow-brown fur.



Eastern Cottontail Rabbit
(*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

Mating and Breeding: From February to September in Maryland, male rabbits, called bucks, will mate with as many females, called does, as possible. Cottontail males will fight each other for females, and perform dances to attract the female. The female will produce, on the average, three to four litters of young each year. Four to five rabbits are the average litter size. Young are born naked and blind 30 days after the female has mated. Females make a shallow depression in the ground and uses its own fur to line the nest. Young are nursed at dawn and dusk. The female mates again right after birth. Young leave the female at about five weeks. They then become capable of breeding at 2 months of age.

Lifespan: Can live as long as five years in the wild. Most live about one to two years.

Food Habits: Herbivores. In the spring and summer rabbits eat a variety of tender vegetation, from grasses, clovers, vegetable crops and blackberries. In the winter they will eat twigs and bark of young trees.

Habitat: Edges, meadows, brushy areas, thickets, backyards, especially those with brush piles.

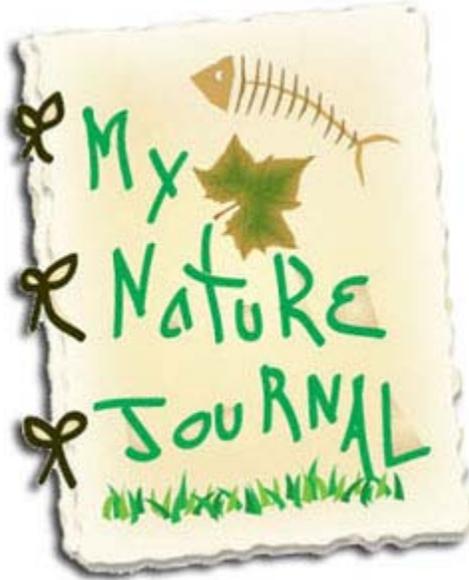
Home Range: 5 to 8 acres

Senses: Cottontails have excellent sight with their large eyes, excellent hearing and smelling.

Behavior: Usually hop, but can leap up to 10 feet. Will stand on its hind feet to view areas. When being chased they circle their territory and will jump sideways to break their scent trail. Can swim. In the winter time they will take shelter in a groundhog den, but do not dig a den. Cottontails are solitary except when mating or raising young, although rabbits in the winter time will be seen chasing each other around as though playing.

Vocalizations: Cottontails make a variety of sounds. They cry to warn of predators. Females will grunt to warn others to stay away and both sexes will squeal.

Did you know? Cottontails serve as an important food source for a variety of predators, including hawks, owls, fox, weasels and coyotes.



Autumn Journals for Children

Nature Journaling with your children can be rewarding. Autumn is a wonderful time to start keeping a journal.

Decide ahead of time what to focus on for each day's journaling. For younger children get blank paper for them to use. Later you can place this in a binder or scrapbook. Older children will find a book of blank pages suitable. Have pencils available as the preferred writing tool. Be sure to include some basic nature field guides for children, and a small magnifying glass or lenses to help observe parts of plants and insects. And although not necessary, binoculars are helpful to observe songbirds.

Take a mini field trip to your backyard, or local park. Allow the children to explore and observe prior to writing. Then ask the children to write down what they saw. What was their favorite wild thing? Ask them to write about what they want to share with others. Older children can record the date, time, location and weather for each day's observations.

During the autumn season, the children can include include leaf and tree bark rubbings in their journal. Record the day the leaves began to change color and how many days it took for all the leaves to change. Keep a record of how many birds are coming to the bird feeder. Record and sketch how the plants look on the day of the first frost.

Journaling will improve your children's observation skills and help them appreciate nature. You will discover children enjoy exploring and observing the natural world.

Safflower Seeds for Bird Feeding

Safflower is one of our older cultivated seeds. Seeds of this plant are found in ancient Egyptian tombs. It's an annual, which produces a multi-sided, hard white seed when hulled. Safflower, until recently, was grown primarily for oil and dyes. Once imported from Japan, its seed is grown commercially in the western US, where it does well in arid conditions. The seed was found by bird feeding enthusiasts to be attractive to a number of songbirds and squirrels generally do not like this seed.

Try safflower seed in a mixture of sunflower seed to reduce squirrels coming to a feeder. Once the birds get used to the safflower, go to entirely safflower seed. This often causes the squirrels to look elsewhere for food. You will continue to attract cardinals, chickadees, grosbeaks, nuthatches, titmice, and woodpeckers. Some backyard bird feeding folks claim using safflower reduces starlings and House Sparrows. However, there are indications from others that in some areas these species learn to like the seed.

Putting safflower seed on an open platform feeder is a good way to attract cardinals to your backyard bird watching site. Placing the seed in a tube feeder should attract chickadees, titmice and woodpeckers.

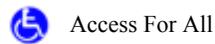


Northern cardinal at safflower feeder

Acknowledgements:

- Photograph of Canada Goldenrod, courtesy of GE Cooper, Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution.
 - Photograph of Canada Goldenrod, courtesy of Ted Bodner @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Miller, J.H. and K.V. Miller. 2005. Forest plants of the southeast and their wildlife uses. University of Georgia Press, Athens.
 - Photograph of Eastern Cottontail Rabbit, iStock.
 - Illustration of nature journal, courtesy of L. Wiley, Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources.
 - Photograph of Northern Cardinal at safflower feeder, iStock
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