



## Mysterious Songbird Disease

In recent weeks, our neighbors in the midwest, mid-Atlantic, and southeast have reported an unusually high number of songbirds found sick or already dead. Common symptoms seen among many of the affected birds include swollen and crusted eyes, trouble standing, and disoriented behavior. Although wildlife biologists have been able to rule out some infectious diseases, including West Nile and avian influenza, they have not yet determined whether an infectious pathogen is responsible. Since the possibility remains that the disease is infectious, citizens in states without any reported outbreaks, including Connecticut, can take a few key steps to prevent the spread of disease and protect our songbirds.

The species most affected so far have been common visitors to backyard bird feeders and birdbaths—this includes Blue Jays, Common Grackles, American Robins, and European Starlings, many of them immature.

**Here's what you can do to help:** [www.ctaudubon.org](http://www.ctaudubon.org)

- Birdfeeders and birdbaths should be removed and stored indoors in order to prevent birds from congregating and potentially spreading disease.
- Once removed, bird feeders and baths should be cleaned with a 10 percent bleach solution to remove any lingering pathogens.
- If you happen to observe a songbird that is still alive but is exhibiting the symptoms listed above, please call a [wildlife rehabilitator](#) to receive further directions.
- If you find a dead songbird, you can photograph it and report the sighting to the DEEP using the form found here: [www.cfwwildbirdmortalityreporting.ct.gov](http://www.cfwwildbirdmortalityreporting.ct.gov)
- If you notice five or more dead birds in one location or multiple dead birds over the course of a few days, call the **DEEP Wildlife Division at (860) 424-3011**.
- To remove the diseased bird(s) from your property, wear gloves or a plastic bag and place it inside a sealable bag. Do not save the dead birds—simply dispose of the bag in the trash and make sure it is not accessible to pets.

In states with ongoing outbreaks, wildlife officials have reported that calling for citizens to remove their bird feeders has helped and the number of sick or dead birds has already decreased. Bird lovers hesitant to take a food source away from their avian visitors can rest easy knowing that birds have an abundance of food available to them during the summer and fall and they will quickly learn to rely on fruits, seeds, and insects instead of bird feeders.

Currently, the states closest to Connecticut with affected songbird populations are Pennsylvania to the west and New Jersey to the south. By staying vigilant and removing bird feeders and baths now, while Connecticut songbirds are not displaying any of the telltale symptoms, we can do our best to help our local feathered friends before an outbreak takes place.