



In the heart of rural Florida, birdhouses are more than just cute decorations - they are powerful tools that connect art, agriculture, and nature. For many years, farmers and ranchers have used birdhouses to help keep their land healthy, productive, and full of life.

Nature's Pest Control: Many birds found in Florida - such as wrens, chickadees, bluebirds, swallows, and even ibises - eat insects that can damage crops. They feed on caterpillars, beetles, and flies that harm citrus trees, strawberries, blueberries, sugarcane, vegetables, and pastureland. By adding birdhouses to their pest management plans, farmers invite these natural helpers to move in and reduce the need for chemical pesticides.

Even though a healthy bird population usually means a healthier environment for everyone, not all birds are beneficial to farms. Some species can peck at fruit, eat seeds, or gather in large numbers and feed on grains, nuts, and fruits. So farmers place birdhouses to attract helpful species in areas they'd like them to stay - while using netting, reflective materials and other deterrents to keep problem birds away from crops.



Different Homes for Different Birds: Not all birdhouses are the same. Chicken coops, for example, are like large, open-air birdhouses that give domestic chickens a safe place to nest, lay eggs, and raise their young. For wild birds, larger nesting boxes can attract owls and kestrels. These birds of prey hunt rodents that damage crops in sugar cane fields and citrus orchards. Smaller birdhouses attract bluebirds, wrens, and chickadees, which help control insects. Each type of bird plays an important role, making birdhouses a natural and sustainable way to protect crops.

Want to Join the Fun?

Decorating your own birdhouse is a fun way to celebrate Florida's culture and explore the connection between art, nature, and agriculture.

Do you know any farmers or neighbors who use birdhouses? What kinds of birds do you think they are attracting - and why? Asking questions like how long they have had them up and what they've noticed can lead to great stories from family, friends, and neighbors.

What do you know about the birds in your area? Do you recognize their sounds or know what they look like? Take some time to observe the birds around you - you might even set a goal to see how many different kinds you can identify!

Go to the website below to hear some of the local bird calls 

<https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/florida-bird-sounds/>