

## No More Bad-Mouthing Box Elders!

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### Box Elders and Birds

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The native Box Elder trees, common to our canyons and streams are often bad-mouthed as “trash trees” due to their tendency to attract insects and have soft brittle wood. I grew up with two such trees, a male and a female, in my front yard. They were full of life and a delight to a child who would become a ecologist. Most of us don’t realize that this tree is extremely valuable to wildlife, especially birds, and this is why TreeUtah has begun planting Box Elders in its Jordan River wildlife habitat restoration areas. The trees are home to the Fall Canker Worm, an inchworm caterpillar which becomes a small moth. The eggs are laid in the fall and hatch out into small, green and brown striped caterpillars which eat holes in the young growing Box Elder leaves. It is no accident that this is precisely when the Yellow Warblers and many other neo-tropical migratory birds are arriving here from Central America and Mexico to nest in our steam-side trees. They gather the inchworms and many other insects for their rapidly growing babies. Various sized holes Box Elder tree trunks provide nesting cavities for a variety of other birds such as owls and wrens. The dead, standing trees provide food for burrowing insects which attract woodpeckers. Aphids, spiders and other insects which live in the tree canopy provide additional food for the nesting birds. Bottom line: If you love birds you should love and plant Box Elder trees in the back yard and in your community. No more bad-mouthing Box Elders!