

The Happy Berry

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Preamble - The mission of The Happy Berry is to be an ecologically intensive farm that is *Environmentally Enhancing, Socially rewarding for the community and Economically Sustainable for its stewards*. We want to do this by promoting biological diversity in plants, animals, birds, insects and microbes, in essence *Gaia*. The intent is to promote resilience (maintain structure and function of The Happy Berry despite being impacted by climate change, government change, economic change and other unanticipated changes).

Volunteer Position Available - **Bird Manager**

Why the position is needed –

The Good

Hummingbirds are fruit fly specialists. They sip nectar from flowers as a carbohydrate source and consume fruit flies as a protein source. An invasive species known as Spotted Wing Drosophila or SWD is a problem at The Happy Berry. SWD female has a serrated ovipositor which it uses to saw a whole in developing berries (blueberries, blackberries, grapes for example but also many other wild berries) just as they start to turn color to ripen. They then lay an egg in the berry. Normal fruit flies only lay eggs in damaged or overripe berries. We use several strategies to reduce this problem but do not use insecticides to control the problem. By promoting Hummingbirds we hope this will reduce the problem. **Screech owls and Barn Owls** are Vole predators. Voles eat the roots of blueberry plants. **Purple Martins** are insectivorous and potential predators of cranberry and cherry fruit worms. **Black Cap Chickadees** are predators of Japanese wax scale.

The Bad

Robins forage on blueberries and a migratory flock can eat as much as 250 pounds a day with multiple flocks we can lose 700 lbs a day. Each bird can eat about 0.5 pound a day. They usually arrive about July 25 and leave August 25. We use distress calls of the robin to help reduce depredation.

The Duties

Help is needed to manage the various birds. We provide humming bird feeders for our feathered friends and we have a number of nectar stations set up around the farm. These require upkeep by cleaning and refilling with a sugar solution about every 10 days to 2 weeks, sometimes sooner. We also plant flowers that like Coral Bean and Bee Balm to provide natural forage for the hummingbirds. This person's responsibility would be to keep track of their location and keep them filled and clean and to also keep track of locations of natural forage. These natural forages stations need occasional weeding, fertilizer and care. Other duties are to track the condition of bird boxes and nesting habitat for owls, purple martins and bluebirds. The person will, we hope, make suggestions on how to improve habitat for helpful birds, as well as manage pest birds (see qualifications). We consider investment in birds as an important contribution to sustainability (ecologically, socially and economically) and the regenerative capacity of the farm

Qualifications - The applicant should want to become a hummingbird expert as well as an expert on other birds, carrying out research to learn as much as possible and teach us about owls, bluebirds, chickadees, robins and hummingbirds habits, including, but not limited to, nesting sites, natural forage species, predators and habitats.

Successful applicant - will be able to pick free berries, in season, for themselves and their family