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## Map Your Habitat

26. August 2013 18:48 / Mary Kay / Native Plants / Comments (0)

This web application is mainly just for fun, but I can't help but see loads of potential in it. YardMap is an app run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology which allows you to select your yard (or any property) on a satellite view, and add details about what sort of habitat and structures are there. My yard looks like this:



When I first saw the app, I immediately recalled Tallamy's point that America's largest ecosystem is the giant quilt of personal yards and gardens that we all as individuals oversee. So YardMap is a visual expression of that - imagine if we all contributed to it! We could actually see what thousands of acres of land are contributing (or not contributing) to the natural landscape.

The areas and objects you add to your map also allow you to enter details about how they are constructed, or how they are managed. This allows for a clearer view of the impacts of your habitat decisions on the environment. A sample detail screen looks like this:



YardMap does a few things with the information it is gathering. For instance, this is the overview of my yard:



But just imagine if they keep gathering this information over time. For my yard in particular, for instance, I would like to be able to see reductions in lawn allotment over time, or increases in native plantings, and correlate that with increases in bird sightings over time. Extrapolate that to entire communities, or the whole country.... What a wealth of information (and inspiration) that could be!

It could be a pipe dream, but given the great works the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has been doing regarding bird conservation, I don't think it is unrealistic to hope this is the direction they themselves would like to go.



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