

## Filling Your Cup

By Nirupama Madduri, MD, FAAP

### **Birds and their Therapy Skills**



Waking up in the morning, the sweet singing and chirping from birds around us provides a beautiful backdrop for the start of a new day. In Southern California, we are lucky and have various species who remain here throughout the year. I was struck by this when I traveled to St. Louis to help my younger brother move the weekend of the Spring Equinox. Every time I was standing outside, it was like a choral symphony. Native birds had returned from their winter vacation in the Southern Hemisphere, and they had a lot to say.

Personally, I have always had a fascination and admiration for birds. They catch our attention with their plumage and singing, and their journeys can be extraordinary. They are world-travelers, but return to the place they identify as home. I remember our neighbor from my hometown called my dad and said, “The Martins are coming! The Martins are coming! Get the house ready!”. My dad was very confused until our neighbor clarified that Martins are a species of birds, and my dad was advised to make sure the birdhouse he gifted our family was ready to accommodate them.

Researchers have also evaluated this and published very positive findings. A study evaluating 1,292 users of an app, Urban Mind, where one is prompted on three daily occasions to record what one experiences in the present moment. During data analysis, researchers noticed a positive association with hearing or seeing birds and mental wellness, even when adjusting for confounders such as whether or not they could see foliage or hear water running (R Hammoud et al, 2022). In addition, Hammoud et al found that hearing birds singing and chirping had a positive effect on mental wellness regardless of whether or not a participant was diagnosed with depression (2022). In addition, hearing birdsongs significantly reduced anxiety (E Stobbe et al, 2022).

Though we spend a majority of our days within a clinic space that may not have windows, we have access to soundscapes. Meditation apps, such as “Calm” or “Insight Timer” have a variety of options where there are birds singing. Easiest option is to open our windows in our homes in the morning or in our cars on the drive to and from work. When I am actually walking in the parking lot to my car, mockingbirds, hummingbirds, and doves are usually waiting to perform.