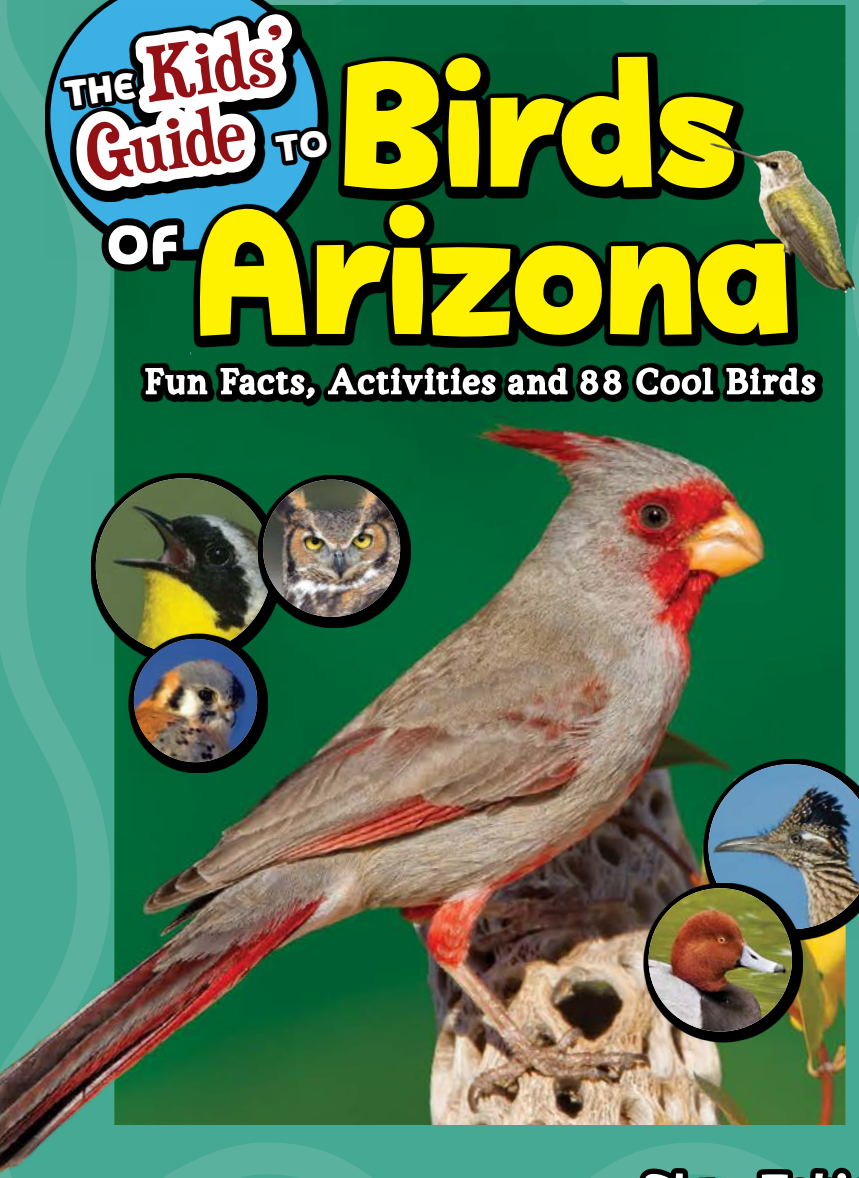
The Kids' Guide to Birds of Arizona



Fun Facts, Activities and 88 Cool Birds

Stan Tekiela

The Kids' Guide to Birds of Arizona

Fun Facts, Activities and 88 Cool Birds

by Stan Tekiela

Adventure Publications
Cambridge, Minnesota

DEDICATION

To all the children who enjoy the world of birds as much as I do.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to the National Wildlife Refuge System along with state and local agencies, both public and private, for stewarding the lands that are critical to the many bird species we so love.

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To the best of the publisher's knowledge, all photos were of live birds. Some were photographed in a controlled condition.

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The Kids' Guide to Birds of Arizona: Fun Facts, Activities and 88 Cool Birds

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COOL BIRDS IN ARIZONA

The Kids' Guide to Birds of Arizona is a fun, easy-to-use guide for anyone interested in seeing and identifying birds. As a child, I spent hours of enjoyment watching birds come to a wooden feeder that my father built in our backyard. We were the only family in the neighborhood who fed birds, and we became known as the nature family.

Now, more people feed birds in their backyards than those who go hunting or fishing combined. Not only has it become very popular to feed and watch birds, but young and old alike are also identifying them and learning more about them.

Arizona is a fantastic place to see all sorts of birds. In fact, more than 550 species are found here! That makes it one of the top states to watch an incredible variety of birds. In this field guide for Arizona, I'm featuring 88 of the most common of these great species.

We have marvelous habitats in Arizona that are perfect for birds. Each habitat supports different kinds of birds. Arizona is the only state that has four distinct deserts—the Sonoran, the Mohave, the Chihuahuan and the Great Basin deserts. Believe it or not, each desert is home to many different kinds of birds, such as the Cactus Wren and Roadrunner.

In addition to the deserts, Arizona has some very high mountains. With many reaching

more than 8,000 feet, these mountains are covered with lush green trees providing habitat for many species of birds. It is thought that nearly half of all the birds species in the United States either nests, winters or passes through this region, making it one of the very top birding spots in the U.S.

Arizona has lots of oak forest habitats! Birds that prefer this habitat are often bright and colorful, and they build nests in leafy trees. In addition, there are a lot of ponds and small lakes dotting the Arizona landscape. These freshwater environments are home to Ring-necked Ducks, Northern Pintail and more.

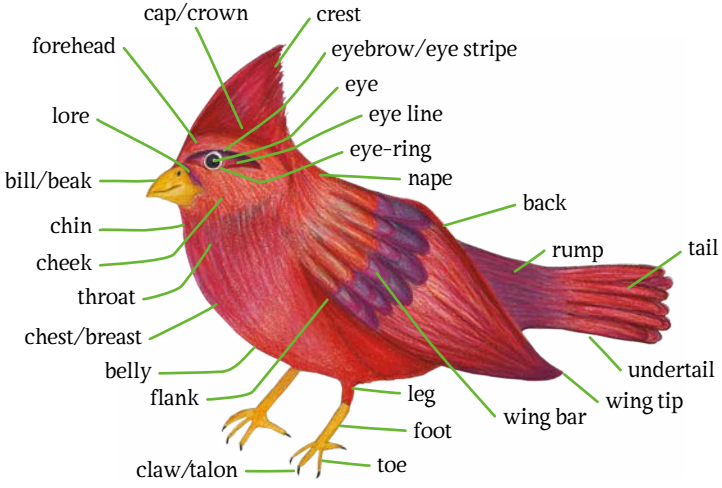
The weather here also plays a role in the kinds of birds we see. Curved-billed Thrashers, Vermilion Flycatchers and many more birds nest here during summer. Migrating shorebirds, such as American Avocets and Killdeer, come to Arizona for our warm winters. On top of that, backyard birds, most notably hummingbirds, Pyrrhuloxia and cardinals, enjoy our seasons year-round.

As you can see, Arizona is a terrific place to watch all kinds of cool birds. It is my sincere hope that you and your family will like watching and feeding birds as much as I did with my family when I was a kid. Let this handy book guide you into a lifetime of appreciating birds and nature.

BODY BASICS OF A BIRD

It's good to know the names of a bird's body parts. The right terminology will help you describe and identify a bird when you talk about it with your friends and family.

The basic parts of a bird are labeled in the illustration below. This drawing is a combination (composite) of several birds and should not be regarded as one particular species.



AMAZING NESTS

I am fascinated with bird nests! They are amazing structures that do more than just provide a place for egg laying. Nests create a small climate-controlled environment that's beneficial for both keeping the eggs warm and raising the young after they hatch.

From the high treetops to the ground, there are many kinds of nests. Some are simple, while others are complex. In any case,

they function in nearly the same way. Nests help to contain the eggs so they don't roll away. They also help to keep baby birds warm on cold nights, cool on hot days and dry during rains.

The following illustrations show the major types of nests that birds build in Arizona.

GROUND PLATFORM CUP PENDULOUS CAVITY

A **ground nest** can be a mound of plant materials on the ground or in the water. Some are just a shallow spot scraped in the earth.

A **platform nest** is a cluster of sticks with a depression in the center. It is secured to the platform of a tree fork or to several tree branches.

A **cup nest** has a cupped interior, like a bowl.

A **pendulous nest** is a woven nest that hangs and swings freely, like a pendulum, from a branch.

A **cavity nest** is simply a cavity, or hole, usually in a tree.

The first step in nest building is to choose an appropriate site. Each bird species has a unique requirement for this. Some birds, such as American Robins, just need a tree branch. Others, like Western Bluebirds, look for a cavity and build the nest inside. Still others, such as Killdeer, search for camouflaged ground to scrape out a nest. Sometimes birds such as Turkey Vultures don't bother building a nest at all if they spot a hard-to-reach cliff or rocky ledge, where it will be safe to lay their eggs.

Nest materials usually consist of common natural items found in the area, like sticks or dried grass. Birds use other materials, such as mud or spiderwebs, to glue the materials together.

One of the amazing things about nest construction is that the parents don't need building plans or tool belts. They already know by instinct how to build nests, and they use their beaks and feet as their main tools.

To bring in nesting materials, birds must make many trips back and forth to the nest site. Most use their beaks to hold as much material as possible during each trip. Some of the bigger birds, like Bald Eagles, use larger materials, such as thick sticks and thin branches. They grasp and carry these items with their feet.

Nest building can take two to four days or longer, depending on the species and nest type. The simpler the nest, the faster the construction. Mourning Dove parents, for example, take just a few days to collect one to two dozen sticks for their platform nest. Woodpecker pairs, however, work upwards of a week to **excavate**, or dig out, a suitable nesting cavity. Large and more complicated platform nests, such as a Bald Eagle nest, may take weeks or even a month to complete, but these can be used for years and are worth the extra effort.

WHO BUILT THAT NEST?

In the majority of bird species, the chief builder is the female. In other species, both the female and the male typically share in the construction equally.

In general, when male and female birds look vastly different, the female does most of the work. When the male and female look alike or appear very similar, they tend to share the tasks of nest

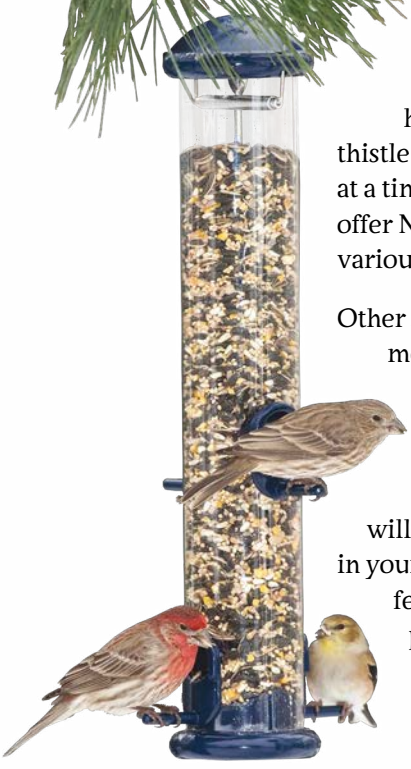
building and feeding the young. Alternatively, some species of woodpeckers have a different building plan. When they chisel out a nesting chamber, often the male does more of the work after the female has chosen the site.

ATTRACTING BIRDS WITH FEEDERS

To get more birds to visit your yard, an easy way to invite them is to put out bird feeders. Bird feeders are often as unique as the birds themselves, so the types of feeders you use really depends on the kinds of birds you're trying to attract.

Hopper feeders are often wooden or plastic. Designed to hold a large amount of seeds, they often have a slender opening along the bottom, which dispenses the seeds. Birds land along the sides and help themselves to the food. Hopper feeders work well as main feeders in conjunction with other types of feeders. They are perfect for offering several kinds of seed mixes for cardinals, finches, nuthatches, chickadees and more.

Tube feeders with large seed ports and multiple perches are very popular. Often mostly plastic, they tend to be rugged enough to last several years and can be easily cleaned. These feeders are great for black oil sunflower seeds and seed mixes, which are favorites of cardinals and all the other bird species that also visit hopper feeders.



Some tube feeders have small holes, allowing incredibly tiny thistle seeds to be dispensed just a few at a time. Use this kind of feeder to offer Nyjer seed, which will attract various finches.

Other styles of tube feeders have a wire mesh covering with openings large enough for birds to extract one of their favorite foods—peanuts out of the shell. Most birds enjoy peanuts, so these feeders will be some of the most popular in your yard. Another variety of tube feeder has openings large enough for peanuts in the shell. These are also very popular with the birds.

Ground feeders allow a wide variety of birds to access the food. The simplest and easiest feeders to use, they consist of a flat platform with a lip around the edges to keep seeds and corn from spilling out. Some have a roof to keep rain and snow off the food. With or without a roof, drainage holes in the bottom are important. Ground feeders will bring in towhees and many other birds to your backyard, including doves, and even mallards if you're near water.

Suet feeders are simply wire cages that hold cakes of **suet**. The wire allows woodpeckers, nuthatches and other birds to cling securely to the feeder while pecking out chunks of suet. The best suet feeders have a vertical extension at the bottom where

a woodpecker can brace its tail and support itself while feeding. These are called tail-prop suet feeders.

Nectar feeders are glass or plastic containers that hold sugar water. These feeders usually have plastic parts that are bright red, a color that is extremely attractive to hummingbirds, but orioles and woodpeckers will also stop for a drink. They often have up to four ports for access to the liquid and yellow bee guards to prevent bees from getting inside.

Mealworm feeders can be very basic—a simple glass or plastic cup or container will do. Pick one with sides tall enough and make sure the material is slippery enough to stop the lively mealworms from crawling out. Bluebirds especially love this wiggly treat!

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Birds move pretty fast, so you don't often get a lot of time to observe them. To help you quickly find the birds in the book, this guide is organized by color. Simply note the most prominent color of the bird you've seen. A Hairy Woodpecker, for example, is black and white and has a red mark on its head. Since this bird is mostly black and white, you would find it in the black and white section.

Within each color section, the birds are organized by size, from small to large. Use the Real Quick sidebar to find the size that your bird appears to be.

When the male and female of a species are different colors (like the Northern Shoveler pair below), they are shown in their own color sections. In these cases, the opposite sex is included in an inset photo with a page reference so you can easily turn to it.

If you already know the name of the bird you've seen, use the checklist/index to get the page number, and flip to it to learn more about the bird.

To further help you with identification, check the range maps to see where and when the bird you have sighted is normally in Arizona. Range maps capture our current knowledge of where the birds are during a given year (presence) but do not indicate how many birds are in the area (density). In addition, since birds fly around freely, it's possible to see them outside of their ranges. So please use the maps to get a general idea of where the birds are most likely to be seen.

For more about the information given for each bird in this guide, turn to the Northern Cardinal sample on pgs. 16–17.

While you're learning about birds and identifying them, don't forget to check out the fun-filled things to do starting on pg. 220. Score a big hit with the birds in your yard by creating tasty treats or making your own bird food from the recipes. Put out some nesting materials to help birds build their nests. Consider signing up for a cool citizen science project suitable for the entire family. These are just a few of the activities that are such great fun, you'll want to do them all!

Northern Cardinal

Common name

Look for the black mask

Field markings that help identify the bird

Colored border shows the color section of the opposite sex

Turn to the page number to see the opposite sex of the species

SAMPLE

Color tab

Mostly Red

What to look for:
outstanding features; may include other plumages and descriptions

Where you'll find them:
where you're most likely to see the bird

Calls and songs:
songs, calls and other sounds the bird makes

On the move:
anything about flight, flocks, travel and other movements

What they eat:
foods the bird eats and the kinds of feeders it visits

Nest:
type of nest; may include nest site, materials and more

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
number of eggs, color and marks; **incubation** and feeding duties; may include how many broods

Spends the winter:
where the bird goes when it's cold or when food is scarce

REAL QUICK

Length from head to tail

Size
8–9"

Type of nest the bird calls home

Nest
CUP

Type of feeder the bird generally visits

Feeder
HOPPER

Range map

year-round
summer
migration
winter

The bold word means it is defined in the glossary

SAW IT!

After you've seen it, checkmark it

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Fun and interesting facts about the bird. Information not typically found in other field guides.

Brown-headed Cowbird

Look for the brown head

pg. 83

Mostly Black

What to look for:
glossy black bird with a chocolate-brown head and a sharp, pointed gray bill

Where you'll find them:
forest edges, open fields, farmlands and backyards

Calls and songs:
sings a low, gurgling song that sounds like water moving; cowbird young are raised by other bird parents, but they still end up singing and calling like their own parents, whom they've never heard

On the move:
Mom flies quietly to another bird's nest, swiftly lays an egg, then flies quickly away

What they eat:
insects and seeds; visits seed feeders

Nest:
doesn't nest; lays eggs in the nests of other birds

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
white eggs with brown marks; the **host** bird incubates any number of cowbird eggs in her nest and feeds the cowbird young along with her own

Spends the winter:
in Arizona and other southwestern states

REAL QUICK

Size
7½"

Nest
NONE

Feeder
TUBE OR HOPPER

year-round
summer
winter

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Cowbirds are **brood parasites**, meaning they don't nest or raise their own families. Instead, they lay their eggs in other birds' nests, leaving the host birds to raise their young. Cowbirds have laid their eggs in the nests of more than 200 other bird species.

European Starling

Look for the glittering, iridescent feathers

Mostly Black

What to look for:
shiny and **iridescent** purplish-black in spring and summer, speckled in fall and winter; yellow bill in spring, gray in fall; pointed wings and a short tail

Where you'll find them:
lines up with other starlings on power lines; found in all habitats but usually associated with people, farms, suburban yards and cities

Calls and songs:
mimics the songs of up to 20 bird species; mimics other sounds, even imitating the human voice

On the move:
large family groups gather with blackbirds in fall

What they eat:
bugs, seeds and fruit; visits seed and **suet** feeders

Nest:
cavity; filled with dried grass; often takes a cavity from other birds

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
4–6 bluish eggs with brown marks; Mom and Dad sit on the eggs and feed the babies

Spends the winter:
in Arizona and other southwestern states

REAL QUICK

Size
7½"

Nest
CAVITY

Feeder
TUBE OR HOPPER

year-round

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

The starling is a mimic that can sound like any other bird. It's not a native bird; 100 starlings from Europe were introduced to New York City in 1890–91. Today, European Starlings are one of the most common songbirds in the country.

Phainopepla

Look for the ragged black crest

pg. 153

Mostly Black

What to look for:
slim, long, glossy black bird with a ragged crest and deep-red eyes; wing patches near tips of wings are white and are obvious in flight

Where you'll find them:
scrub desert

Calls and songs:
imitates many species of birds, such as the Red-tailed Hawk

On the move:
quick, direct flight

What they eat:
fruit (usually mistletoe) and insects

Nest:
cup in a mistletoe cluster; Mom and Dad build it

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
2–4 gray eggs with brown markings; Mom and Dad incubate the eggs and feed the chicks

Spends the winter:
in parts of southern Arizona and California

REAL QUICK

Size
8"

Nest
CUP

Feeder
NONE

year-round
summer
winter

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

This cool-looking bird's common name comes from the Greek *phain pepla*, which means "shining robe," referring to the male's shiny black feathers. They are well known for eating the fruit of the desert mistletoe.

Spotted Towhee

Look for the rusty red-brown sides

Mostly Black

What to look for:
mostly black with rusty sides, a white belly, white spots on the wings, red eyes and a long black tail with a white tip; female is very similar but with a brown head

Where to find them:
shrubby areas with short trees and thick bushes, backyards and parks

Calls and songs:
calls "tow-hee" distinctly; also has a characteristic **call** that sounds like "drink-your-tea"

On the move:
short flights between shrubby areas and heavy **cover**; flashes white wing patches during flight

What they eat:
insects, seeds and fruit; comes to ground feeders

Nest:
cup; Mom constructs the nest

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
3–4 creamy-white eggs with brown marks; Mom incubates the eggs; Dad and Mom feed the young

Spends the winter:
in Arizona, other southwestern states and Mexico

REAL QUICK

Size
8½"

Nest
CUP

Feeder
GROUND

year-round
winter

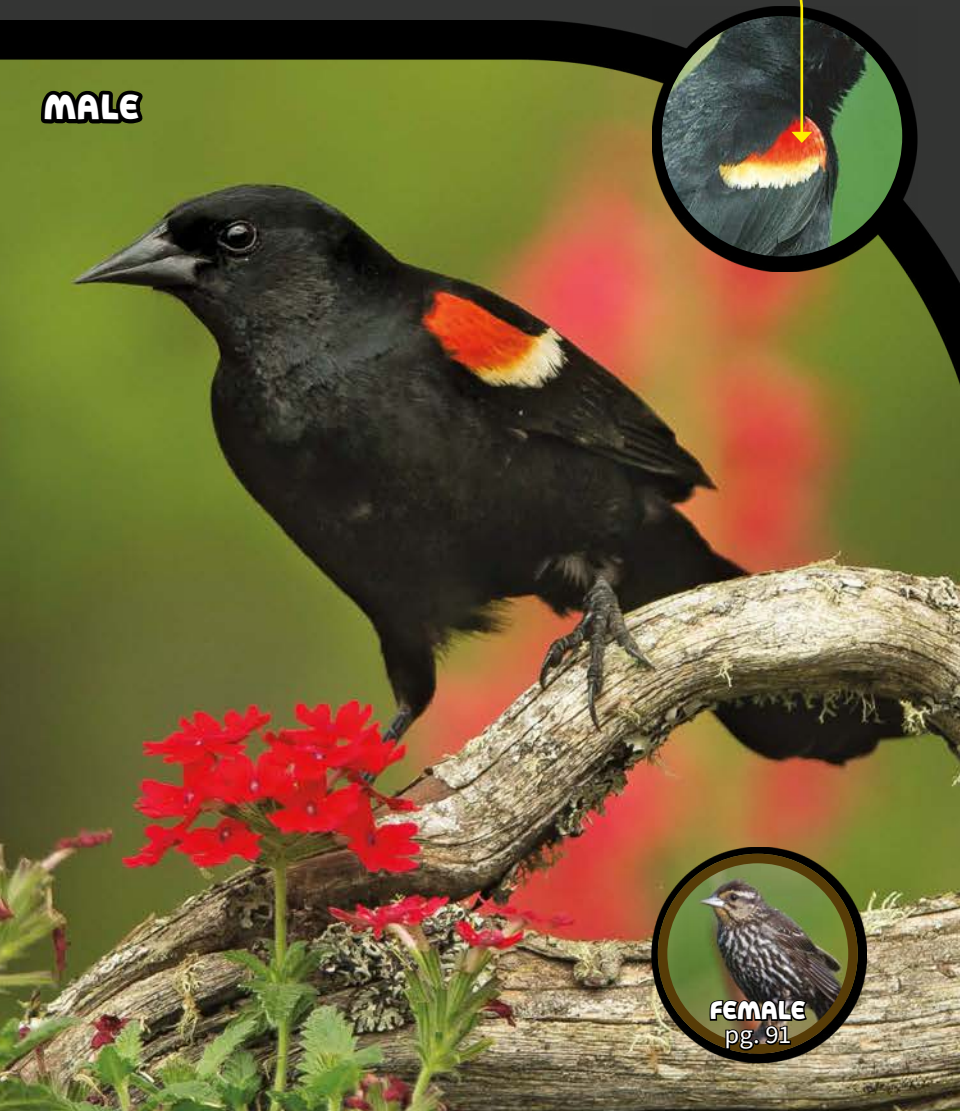
SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

The towhee is named for its distinctive "tow-hee" call. It hops backward with both feet, raking leaves to find insects and seeds. It is a large species of sparrow, nearly the size of a robin. It often has more than one clutch of eggs each breeding season.

Red-winged Blackbird

Look for the red-and-yellow shoulder patches



pg. 91

Mostly Black

What to look for:
black bird with red-and-yellow shoulder patches on upper wings; shoulder patches can be partially or completely covered up

Where you'll find them:
around marshes, wetlands, lakes and rivers

Calls and songs:
male sings and repeats calls from cattail tops and the surrounding **vegetation**

On the move:
flocks with as many as 10,000 birds gather in autumn, often with other blackbirds

What they eat:
seeds in spring and autumn, insects in summer; visits seed and **suet** feeders

Nest:
cup; in a thick stand of cattails over shallow water

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
3–4 speckled bluish-green eggs; Mom does all the incubating, but both parents feed the babies

Spends the winter:
in Arizona and other southwestern states, Mexico and Central America

REAL QUICK

Size
8½"

Nest
CUP

Feeder
TUBE OR HOPPER

year-round

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

During autumn and winter, thousands of these birds gather in farm fields, wetlands and marshes. Come spring, males sing to defend territories and show off their wing patches (**epaulets**) to the females. Later, males can be aggressive when defending their nests.

American Coot

Look for the white bill

Mostly Black

What to look for:
gray-to-black with a duck-like white bill, red eyes

Where you'll find them:
in large flocks on open water

Calls and songs:
a unique series of creaks, groans and clicks

On the move:
bobs head while swimming; takes off from water by scrambling across it with wings flapping; huge flocks of up to 1,000 birds gather for migration; migrates at night

What they eat:
insects and aquatic plants

Nest:
ground nest floating in water, anchored to plants

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
9–12 speckled pinkish-tan eggs; Mom and Dad sit on the eggs and feed the **hatchlings**

Spends the winter:
in Arizona and other southwestern states, Mexico and Central America

REAL QUICK

Size
13–16"

Nest
GROUND

Feeder
NONE

year-round

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

The coot is not a duck. Instead of webbed feet, it has large lobed toes! It's smaller than most other **waterfowl**, and it is a great diver and swimmer. You probably won't see it flying, but you may spot one trying to escape from a Bald Eagle (pg. 57). It's also called Mud Hen.

Great-tailed Grackle

Look for the long tail

FEMALE
pg. 105

Mostly Black

What to look for:
a big all-black bird with a shiny purple sheen on the head and back; really long tail; bright yellow eyes

Where you'll find them:
open areas, backyards, parks

Calls and songs:
high-pitched, vibrating call given over and over

On the move:
seen around parking lots, sitting in trees, walking on the ground, often calling and chasing each other

What they eat:
insects, fruit, seeds; comes to seed feeders

Nest:
cup; Mom builds it

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
3–5 greenish-blue eggs with brown markings; Mom incubates and feeds the young

Spends the winter:
in Arizona and other southwestern states

REAL QUICK

Size
17–19"

Nest
CUP

Feeder
HOPPER

year-round

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Male Great-tailed Grackles make a number of different calls, and they aren't shy about yelling at animals (or people!) who get too close. Very intelligent birds, Great-tailed Grackles are often seen around food trucks, where they might find food scraps.

American Crow

Look for the glossy black feathers

Mostly Black

What to look for:
glossy black all over and a black bill

Where you'll find them:
all habitats—wilderness, rural, suburban, cities

Calls and songs:
a harsh "caw" **call**; imitates other birds and people

On the move:
flaps constantly and glides downward; moves around to find food; gathers in huge communal flocks of more than 10,000 birds during winter

What they eat:
fruit, insects, mammals, fish and dead carcasses (**carrion**); visits seed and **suet** feeders

Nest:
platform; adds bright or shiny items and often uses the same site every year if a Great Horned Owl (pg. 125) hasn't taken it

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
4–6 speckled bluish-to-olive eggs; Mom sits on the eggs; Mom and Dad feed the youngsters

Spends the winter:
in northern Arizona

REAL QUICK

Size
18"

Nest
PLATFORM

Feeder
HOPPER

year-round
winter

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

The crow is one of the smartest of all birds. It's very social and often entertains itself by chasing other birds. It eats roadkill but avoids being hit by vehicles. Some can live as long as 20 years! Crows without mates, called helpers, help to raise the young.

Common Raven

Look for the large thick bill

Mostly Black

What to look for:
black with a shaggy beard of feathers on throat and chin; long feathers on legs make it look like it's wearing pants

Where you'll find them:
remote or wilderness settings and also cities

Calls and songs:
a deep, raspy call that's lower-pitched than a crow's call; has more pops and unusual calls than a crow

On the move:
known for its aerial acrobatics and long swooping dives; able to soar on thermals

What they eat:
insects, fruit, small animals and dead carcasses (**carrion**), especially roadkill

Nest:
platform; Mom and Dad build at the same site for many years

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
4–6 pale green eggs with brown marks; Mom incubates while Dad brings food

Spends the winter:
in Arizona

REAL QUICK

Size
22-27"

Nest
PLATFORM

Feeder
NONE

year-round

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

The Common Raven may be the smartest bird. When ravens find food, they help out other ravens by telling other ravens where to find it. Ravens build a large nest out of sticks; some nests can be several feet wide!

Turkey Vulture

Look for the naked red head

Mostly Black

What to look for:
naked red head and legs and an ivory bill; **juvenile** has a gray-to-blackish head and bill

Where you'll find them:
in trees, sunning itself with wings outstretched; drying after a rain

Calls and songs:
mostly **mute**, just grunts and groans

On the move:
holds wings in an upright V in flight, teetering from wing tip to wing tip as it soars and hovers

What they eat:
dead carcasses (**carrion**); parents **regurgitate** food for their young

Nest:
no nest, or in a minimal nest on a cliff, in a cave or even sometimes in a hollow tree trunk

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
1–3 white eggs with brown marks; Mom and Dad incubate the eggs and feed the baby vultures

Spends the winter:
in southern Arizona, Mexico, Central America and South America

REAL QUICK

Size
26–32"

Nest
NONE

Feeder
NONE

year-round
summer

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

This is one of the few birds with a good sense of smell. It has a strong bill for tearing apart flesh. Unlike hawks and eagles, it has weak feet more suited for walking than grasping wiggly **prey**. The bare head reduces its risk of getting diseases from carcasses.

Black Phoebe

Look for the white belly

What to look for:
a black bird with a white belly and undertail, dark eyes, bill and legs, and a long, narrow tail; can raise and lower its small crest

Where you'll find them:
shrubby areas near water, backyards

Calls and songs:
males sing a series of sweet notes, tee-hee, tee-hoo

On the move:
quick flight to and from perches, where it watches for **prey**

What they eat:
insects, bugs, and spiders; they may come to mealworm feeders

Nest:
cup; Mom builds a shallow nest of mud, adhered to rocks or bridges, lined with hair and grass

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
3–6 white eggs; Mom incubates the eggs; Mom and Dad feed the babies

Spends the winter:
in Arizona; moves around to find food

REAL QUICK

Size
7"

Nest
CUP

Feeder
MEALWORM

year-round

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

A Black Phoebe will perch and quickly pump its tail up and down while watching for **prey**. Then it flies down to the ground to pick up bugs or even grabs insects while in flight. They always build their nests close to sources of water and mud.

Ladder-backed Woodpecker

Look for the black eye stripe and mustache

What to look for:
horizontal black-and-white zebra stripes on back, wings and tail; white breast and belly with black spots; red crown, black eye stripe and mustache mark and a dark bill; female same as male but lacks a red crown

Where you'll find them:
desert scrub, pinyon-juniper woodlands

Calls and songs:
high-pitched series of "peeks"

On the move:
quick direct flight landing on trunk of tree

What they eat:
insects and fruit, seeds

Nest:
cavity; sometimes in a mesquite or saguaro cactus, yucca plant or utility pole; Mom and Dad excavate

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
2–4 white eggs; Mom and Dad incubate the eggs and feed the babies

Spends the winter:
in Arizona

REAL QUICK

Size
7"

Nest
CAVITY

Feeder
MEALWORM

year-round

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Once called Cactus Woodpecker, this is a woodpecker of the desert and juniper forests. They can be very quiet and secretive, making them difficult to spot. Its name comes from the black-and-white pattern on its wings and back, resembling a ladder.

Red-naped Sapsucker

Look for the black-and-white pattern on back

What to look for:
black-and-white pattern on the back in two rows; red forehead, chin and nape of neck; female same as male but has a white chin and more white on the back

Where you'll find them:
aspen forests near streams and creeks

Calls and songs:
harsh squeak, repeated; slow, irregular drumming

On the move:
fast flight to a tree trunk

What they eat:
insects and tree **sap**; comes to feeders

Nest:
cavity that Mom and Dad excavate

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
3–7 pale white eggs without markings; Mom and Dad incubate eggs; both parents feed the baby woodpeckers

Spends the winter:
in Arizona; moves around to find food

REAL QUICK

Size
8½"

Nest
CAVITY

Feeder
SUET

year-round
summer
winter

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Despite their name, they don't suck sap. Sapsuckers lap up the sap with their tongue, which has tiny hair-like projections similar to a paint brush. They drill a neat series of holes, called taps, in birch, aspen and other trees to feed on the sap.

Hairy Woodpecker

Look for the large bill

What to look for:
spotted wings, white belly, large bill and red mark on the back of the head; female lacks a red mark

Where you'll find them:
forests and wooded backyards, parks

Calls and songs:
a sharp chirp before landing on feeders; drums on hollow logs, branches or stovepipes in spring

On the move:
short up-and-down flights from tree to tree with rapid wingbeats

What they eat:
insects, nuts, seeds; visits **suet** and seed feeders

Nest:
cavity; prefers a live tree; excavates a larger, more oval entry than the round hole of the Ladder-backed Woodpecker (pg. 41); usually excavates under a branch, which helps to shield the entrance

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
3–6 white eggs; parents sit on the eggs and bring food to feed their babies

Spends the winter:
doesn't **migrate**; stays in Arizona year-round

REAL QUICK

Size
9"

Nest
CAVITY

Feeder
SUET

year-round

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Larger and much more common than the Ladder-backed Woodpecker. It has a barbed tongue, which it uses to pull out bugs from trees. At the base of its bill, tiny bristle-like feathers protect its nostrils from excavated wood dust.

Gila Woodpecker

Look for the red cap

What to look for:
black-and-white horizontal barring on the back, wings and tail; light brown head, chest and belly; red cap; long dark bill and dark eyes; black barring on white rump; white wrist mark, seen in flight; female same as male, but it lacks the red cap and has a yellow tint on the belly

Where you'll find them:
dry forests, deserts

Calls and songs:
gives a loud, harsh "quirrrrrrr" call to other Gilas and also has a laughing-like "gee-gee-gee-gee" call

On the move:
fast, direct flight landing on vertical surfaces

What they eat:
insects, fruit, seeds

Nest:
cavity; Mom and Dad excavate in a cactus

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
3–4 white eggs; Mom and Dad incubate the eggs and feed the babies

Spends the winter:
in Arizona

REAL QUICK

Size
9"

Nest
CAVITY

Feeder
SUET

year-round

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Gilas are a common woodpecker of the treeless desert, preferring to nest in a saguaro cactus. They visit backyards and parks and are not afraid of people. They perch in their territory and call throughout the day.

Acorn Woodpecker

Look for the white eyes

What to look for:
black back and wings, a red cap and **nape** of neck, and a white forehead, cheeks and eyes; female is similar but has a smaller bill and less red on the head

Where you'll find them:
in oak groves with dead trees

Calls and songs:
very vocal; gives a nasal **call**

On the move:
fast, direct flight to tree trunks; white rump and tips of wings are seen in flight

What they eat:
nuts, fruit, insects, **sap**

Nest:
cavity in a dead tree

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
3–7 white eggs; Mom and Dad incubate eggs; both parents feed the baby woodpeckers

Spends the winter:
in Arizona

REAL QUICK

Size
9"

Nest
CAVITY

Feeder
TUBE OR SUET

year-round

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Acorn Woodpeckers drill many small holes to store acorns for later use. Each hole is just large enough to hold one acorn. They drill and reuse holes in trees, poles and even buildings. These birds live in small **colonies** with up to 5 males and females and many **juveniles.**

Black-necked Stilt

Look for the long red-to-pink legs

Mostly Black & White

What to look for:
black and white with ridiculously long red-to-pink legs and a long black bill; upper parts of the head, neck and back are black and lower parts are white

Where you'll find them:
shallow wetlands

Calls and songs:
high-pitched "yep-yep" given in rapid series

On the move:
slowly stalking through water

What they eat:
aquatic insects, small crustaceans, amphibians, snails, and tiny fish

Nest:
ground; Mom and Dad build it

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
3–5 off-white eggs with dark markings; Dad incubates the eggs during the day and Mom does at night; both Mom and Dad feed the babies

Spends the winter:
in Arizona, Mexico and South America

REAL QUICK

Size
14"

Nest
GROUND

Feeder
NONE

year-round
summer
migration

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

These are strong and elegant birds that stalk shallow wetlands. They stab at prey or swing their bill from side to side, skimming the water for insects. Populations appear stable, but they are susceptible to their shallow ponds drying up in summer.

Ring-necked Duck

Look for the white ring on the blue bill

pg. 111

What to look for:
handsome duck with a black head, chest and back, light gray-to-whitish sides, a blue bill with a thick white ring near the tip and a thinner white ring at the base; head is tall with a sloping forehead

Where you'll find them:
usually in larger freshwater lakes rather than saltwater marshes

Calls and songs:
male gives a quick series of grating barks and grunts; female gives high-pitched peeps

On the move:
dives underwater to forage for food; takes to flight by springing up off the water

What they eat:
aquatic plants and insects

Nest:
ground nest; Mom builds it

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
8–10 grayish-to-brown eggs; Mom incubates the eggs and teaches the young how to feed

Spends the winter:
in Arizona

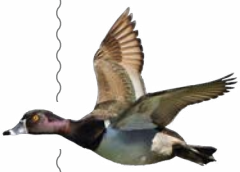
REAL QUICK

Size
16–18"

Nest
GROUND

Feeder
NONE

winter



SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

The Ring-necked Duck is a common winter duck throughout Arizona. It's also called the Ring-billed Duck due to the obvious ring on its bill. Oddly enough, it was named for the faint rusty collar on its neck, which is nearly impossible to see.

American Avocet

Look for the long, thin upturned bill

What to look for:
black-and-white back, white belly and long gray legs; a long, thin upturned bill; head and neck rusty red during breeding, and gray in the winter

Where you'll find them:
shallow wetlands, ponds, shallow lakes, and coastlines and mudflats in the winter

Calls and songs:
a high-pitched "keet, keet" repeated

On the move:
quickly walking in shallow water, often in small groups

What they eat:
insects, **crustaceans**, aquatic plants, fruit

Nest:
ground nest; Mom and Dad build it

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
3–5 light olive-colored eggs with brown markings; Mom and Dad sit on the eggs and feed the young

Spends the winter:
in Arizona and Mexico

REAL QUICK

Size
18"

Nest
GROUND

Feeder
NONE

year-round
migration
winter

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

A shorebird with a long beak and even longer legs, the American Avocet uses its bill to search for insects and crustaceans in muddy water. Very protective of its nest, it will pretend to be hurt to draw a predator away, or it may scare one away by dive-bombing it!

Bald Eagle

Look for the white head

What to look for:
white head and tail, curved yellow bill and yellow feet; **juvenile** has white speckles and a gray bill

Where you'll find them:
often near water; likes open areas with daily food

Calls and songs:
weak, high-pitched screams, one after another

On the move:
a spectacular aerial mating **display** in which one eagle flips upside down and locks talons with another; both fall, tumbling down, then break apart and fly off

What they eat:
fish, **carrion** (dead rabbits and squirrels), birds (mainly ducks), prefers American Coots (pg. 29)

Nest:
massive platform of sticks, usually in a tree; nests used for many years can weigh up to 1,000 pounds

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
2–3 off-white eggs; Mom and Dad share all duties

Spends the winter:
in Arizona

REAL QUICK

Size
31-37"

Nest
PLATFORM

Feeder
NONE

year-round
winter

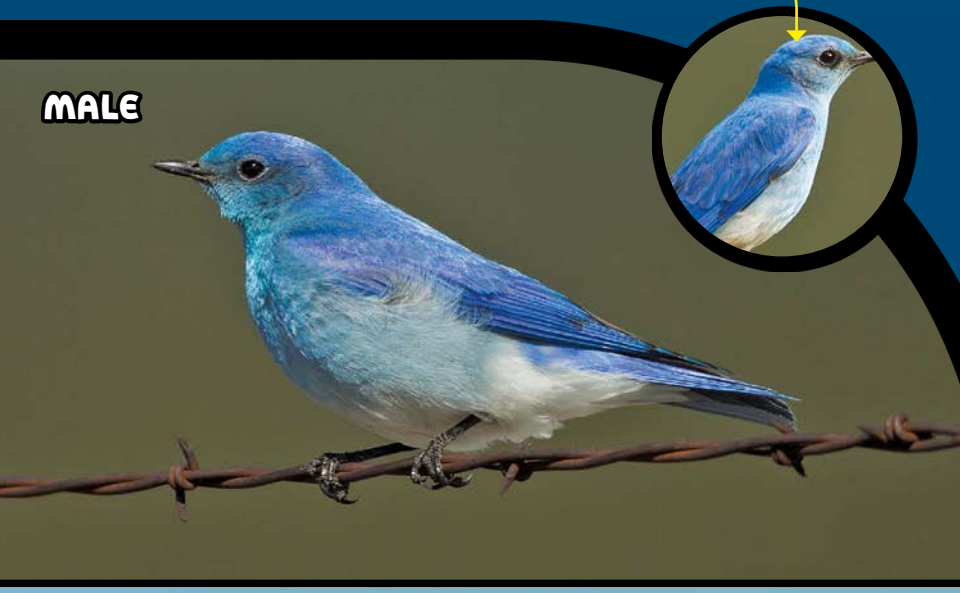
SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Bald Eagles nearly became extinct, but they're doing well now. Their wingspan is huge, stretching out up to 7½ feet! They return to the same nest and add more sticks each year, enlarging it over time. The heads and tails of **juveniles** turn white at 4–5 years.

Mountain Bluebird

Look for the blue head, back, wings and tail



Mostly Blue

What to look for:
male is a sky blue bird with a darker blue head, back, wings and tail and a white lower belly; thin black bill; female is tan with blue on the wings and tail

Where you'll find them:
open mountainous country, prairies, fields

Calls and songs:
a simple warbling "churr," over and over

On the move:
perches while hunting; makes short direct flights

What they eat:
insects

Nest:
cavity; old woodpecker cavity, wooden nest box; Mom lines the cavity, making a cup for the eggs

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
4-6 pale blue eggs without markings; Mom sits on eggs; Mom and Dad feed the young

Spends the winter:
in Arizona, other southwestern states and Mexico

REAL QUICK

Size
7"

Nest
CAVITY

Feeder
MEALWORM

year-round
winter

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Not that long ago, bluebirds were in trouble because people cut down the dead trees bluebirds often use for their nests. Thankfully, bluebirds adapt well to nest boxes, and over the last 30 years, people have placed many of them, helping their populations recover.

Western Bluebird

Look for the rusty-red chest and flanks

Mostly Blue

What to look for:
male has a deep-blue head, neck, throat, back, wings and tail, and a rusty-red chest and flanks; female is duller overall and has a gray head

Where you'll find them:
open **habitats** (prefers farm fields, pastures and roadsides), forest edges, parks and yards

Calls and songs:
a soft "kew" given from a perch

On the move:
fast flight in open country to low perches

What they eat:
insects, fruit; visits mealworm and **suet** feeders

Nest:
cavity; adds a soft lining in an old woodpecker hole or a bluebird nest box; Mom builds it

Eggs, chicks and childcare:
4–6 pale blue eggs; Mom incubates the eggs, and Dad and Mom feed the kids

Spends the winter:
in Arizona, other southwestern states and Mexico; moves around to find food

REAL QUICK

Size
7"

Nest
CAVITY

Feeder
MEALWORM

year-round
winter

SAW IT!

STAN'S COOL STUFF

Western Bluebirds are a familiar bird of open land or woodland edges. They eat mainly insects in the summer and fruit in the winter. Bluebirds nest in existing tree cavities, such as natural openings or old woodpecker holes, but they also come to nest boxes

LEARNING ABOUT BIRDING ON THE INTERNET

Birding online is another fine way to discover more information about birds—plus it's a terrific way to spend time during rainy summer days and winter evenings after sunset. So check out the websites below, and be sure to share with your family and friends the fabulous things you've learned about birds.

eBird

https://ebird.org/home

American Birding Association: Young Birders

https://www.aba.org/aba-young-birders/

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

www.birds.cornell.edu/home

Author Stan Tekiela's website

www.naturesmart.com

In addition, online birding groups can be of valuable assistance to you as well. Facebook has many pages dedicated to specific areas of the state and the birds that live there. These sites are an excellent, real-time resource that will help you spot birds in your region. Consider joining a Facebook birding group.

GLOSSARY

birdsong: A series of musical notes that a bird strings together in a pleasing melody. Also called a song.

brood: A family of bird brothers and sisters that hatched at around the same time.

brood parasites: Birds that don't nest, incubate or raise families, such as Brown-headed Cowbirds (pgs. 19 and 83). See *host*.

call: A nonmusical sound, often a single note, that is repeated.

carrion: A dead and often rotting animal's body, or carcass, that is an important food for many other animals, including birds.

cheesecloth: A loosely woven cotton cloth that is used primarily to wrap cheese. It is also used to strain particles from liquids.

colony: A group of birds nesting together in the same area. The size of a colony can range from two pairs to hundreds of birds.

coniferous: A tree or shrub that has evergreen, needle-like leaves and that produces cones.

cotton batting: A light, soft cotton material, often used to stuff quilts.

cover: A dense area of trees or shrubs where birds nest or hide.

crop-milk: A liquid that pigeons and doves regurgitate (spit up) to feed their young.

crustaceans: A large, mainly aquatic group of critters, such as crayfish, crabs and shrimp.

deciduous: A tree or shrub that sheds its leaves every year.

display: An attention-getting behavior of birds to impress and attract a mate, or to draw predators away from the nest. A display may include dramatic movements in flight or on the ground.

double-scratch: A quick double hop that some birds use to find food.

epaulets: Decorative color patches on the shoulders of a bird, as seen in male Red-winged Blackbirds (pgs. 27 and 91).

excavate: To dig or carefully remove wood or dirt, creating a cavity, hole or tunnel.

fledge: The process of developing flight feathers and leaving the nest.

flock: A group of the same bird species or a gathering of mixed species of birds. Flocks range from a pair of birds to upwards of 10,000 individuals.

habitat: The natural home or environment of a bird.

hatchlings: Baby birds that have recently emerged from their eggs. See *nestlings*.

horns: A tuft or collection of feathers, usually on top of a bird's head, resembling horns.

host: A bird species that takes care of the eggs and babies of other bird species. See *brood parasites*.

incubation: The process of sitting on bird eggs in the nest to keep them warm until they hatch.

iridescent: A luminous, or bright, quality of feathers, with colors seeming to change when viewed from different angles.

jute: A string of rough fibers made from plants.

juvenile: A bird that isn't an adult yet.

lard: Fat from a pig.

lichen: A unique partnership of plant life and fungi growing together and looking and acting as one organism.

lore: The area on each side of a bird's face between the eye and the base of the bill.

migrate: The regular, predictable pattern of seasonal movement by some birds from one region to another, especially to escape winter.

molt: The process of dropping old, worn-out feathers and replacing them with new feathers, usually only one feather at a time.

morph: A bird with a color variation. Morphs also sometimes occur in mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects.

mute: The inability to make or produce audible sounds. The Turkey Vulture (pg. 39), for example, is mostly mute.

nape: The back of a bird's neck.

necklace: The markings around the neck of a bird, as seen in the Western Meadowlark (pg. 219).

nectar: A sugar and water solution found in plant flowers.

nestlings: Young birds that have not yet left the nest. See *hatchlings*.

oak savanna: A grassy habitat with scattered oak trees.

plumage: The collective set of feathers on a bird at any given time.

poster board: A stiff cardboard that is used for displaying information.

prey: Any critter that is hunted and killed by another for food.

raptor: A flesh-eating bird of prey that hunts and kills for food. Hawks, eagles, falcons, owls and vultures are raptors. See *prey*.

refraction: The bending of light.

regurgitate: The process of bringing swallowed food up again to the mouth to feed young birds.

rendered: Animal fat that has been reduced or melted down by heating and then strained in order to make it pure.

sap: The watery liquid that moves up and down within the circulatory system of a tree, carrying nutrients throughout.

silhouettes: Dark shapes or outlines against a lighter background.

speculum: A patch of bright feathers on some birds, such as ducks, found on the wings.

squab: A young pigeon or dove, usually still in the nest. See *nestlings*.

suet: Animal fat, usually beef, that has been heated and made into cakes to feed birds. See *rendered*.

thermals: A column of upward-moving warm air caused by the sun warming the earth. Raptors and other birds gain altitude during flight by "riding" on thermals.

trachea: A large tubelike organ that allows air to pass between the lungs and the mouth of a bird. Also called a windpipe.

trill: A fluttering or repeated series of similar-sounding musical notes given by some birds.

twitter: A high-pitched call of a bird. See *call*.

ultraviolet light: A kind of light that is visible to birds and insects but unseen by people.

vegetation: Any plants, especially those found growing in a particular habitat.

warble: A quiet bird song with many different sounds.

waterfowl: A group of similar birds with a strong connection to water. Ducks, geese, and others, including American Coots (pg. 29), are examples of waterfowl.

CHECKLIST/INDEX BY SPECIES

Use the circles to checkmark the birds you've seen.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Naturalist, wildlife photographer and writer Stan Tekiela is the originator of the popular state-specific field guide series that includes *Birds of Arizona Field Guide*. He has authored more than 195 field guides, nature books, children's books, wildlife audio CDs and playing cards, presenting many species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, trees, wildflowers and cacti in the United States.

With a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural History from the University of Minnesota and as an active professional naturalist for more than 30 years, Stan studies and photographs wildlife throughout the United States and Canada. He has received various national and regional awards for his books and photographs. Also a well-known columnist and radio personality, his syndicated column appears in more than 25 newspapers, and his wildlife programs are broadcast on a number of Midwest radio stations. Stan can be followed on Facebook and Twitter. He can be contacted via www.naturesmart.com.

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