

Field Guide & Birding Journal

MIDWEST BIRDING

COMPANION



Stan Tekiela

BIRDS THAT ARE MOSTLY BLACK

P. 23



BIRDS THAT ARE MOSTLY BLACK AND WHITE

P. 51



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MIDWEST BIRDING

COMPANION

by Stan Tekiela

**Adventure Publications
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WHY WATCH BIRDS IN THE MIDWEST?

Millions of people have discovered bird feeding. It's a simple and enjoyable way to bring the beauty of birds closer to your home. Watching birds at your feeder often leads to a lifetime pursuit of bird identification. This Birding Companion to Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin is a new approach to bird watching.

With a large size and beautiful full-color photographs that make identifications even easier, this book contains 150 species of birds in the Midwest, from common backyard and shoreside visitors to birds only seen during migration and rarer visitors that are only seen on occasion.

But this book is more than just an identification guide. Each page also includes space for keeping track of where and when you spotted each species, and there's also a life list in the back to keep track of all of your observations.

The book also includes:

- Birding hot spots across the region
- Details about birding festivals and events
- Information about bird counts and community science, how to report a rare bird and the basics of what to do if you suspect you've found an injured bird.

There are over 2,000 species of birds found in North America. In the Midwest, more than 500 different kinds of birds have been recorded throughout the years. These bird sightings were diligently recorded by hundreds of bird watchers and became part of the official state record. For example, more than 430 bird species have been seen in Minnesota; by contrast, 390 species have been spotted in Kentucky.

Bird watching, often called birding, is one of the most popular activities in America. Its outstanding appeal in the Midwest is due, in part, to an unusually rich and abundant birdlife. Why are there so many birds? One reason is open space: the Midwestern region of the country occupies a huge portion of the nation's heartland, spanning nearly 800,000 square miles.

Open space is not the only reason there is such an abundance of birds. It's also the diversity of habitat. From the wild shores of the Great Lakes and the towering pines of the North Woods to the prairies of the Great Plains, the Midwest covers a wide range of habitats, elevations and environments.

No matter where you are in the Midwest, there are birds to watch in each season. Whether witnessing hawks migrating in autumn or welcoming back hummingbirds in spring, there is variety and excitement in birding as each season turns to the next.

OBSERVE WITH A STRATEGY; TIPS FOR IDENTIFYING BIRDS

Identifying birds isn't as difficult as you might think. By simply following a few basic strategies, you can increase your chances of successfully identifying most birds you see! One of the first and easiest things to do when you see a new bird is to note its color. (Also, since this book is organized by color, you will go right to that color section to find it.)

Next, note the size of the bird. A strategy to quickly estimate size is to select a small-, medium- and large-sized bird to use for reference. For example, most people are familiar with robins. A robin, measured from tip of the bill to tip of the tail, is 10 inches (25 cm) long. Using the robin as an example of a medium-sized bird, select two other birds, one smaller and one larger. Many people use a House Sparrow, at about 6 inches (15 cm), and an American Crow, about

18 inches (45 cm). When you see a bird that you don't know, you can quickly ask yourself, "Is it smaller than a robin, but larger than a sparrow?" When you look in your field guide to help identify your bird, you'll know it's roughly between 6 and 10 inches (15 to 25 cm) long. This will help to narrow your choices.

Next, note the size, shape and color of the bill. Is it long, short, thick, thin, pointed, blunt, curved or straight? Seed-eating birds, such as Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, have bills that are thick and strong enough to crack even the toughest seeds. Birds that sip nectar, such as Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, need long, thin bills to reach deep into flowers. Hawks and owls tear their prey with very sharp, curving bills. Sometimes, just noting the bill shape can help you decide if the bird is a woodpecker, finch, grosbeak, blackbird or bird of prey.

Next, take a look around and note the habitat in which you see the bird. Is it wading in a marsh? Walking along a riverbank? Soaring in the sky? Is it perched high in the trees or hopping along the forest floor? Because of their preferences in diet and habitat, you'll usually see robins hopping on the ground, but not often eating the seeds at your feeder. Or you'll see a Black-capped Chickadee sitting on a branch of a tree, but not climbing down the tree trunk headfirst the way a nuthatch does.

Noticing what a bird is eating will give you another clue to help you identify that bird. Feeding is a big part of any bird's life. Fully one-third of all bird activity revolves around searching for and catching food, or actually eating. While birds don't always follow all the rules of what we think they eat, you can make some general assumptions. Northern Flickers, for instance, feed upon ants and other insects, so you wouldn't expect to see them visiting a backyard feeder. Some birds, such as Barn Swallows, feed upon flying insects and spend hours swooping and diving to catch a meal.

Sometimes you can identify a bird by the way it perches. Body posture can help you differentiate between an American Crow and a Red-tailed Hawk. American Crows lean forward over their feet on a branch, while hawks perch in a vertical position. Look for this the next time you see a large unidentified bird in a tree.

Birds in flight are often difficult to identify, but noting the size and shape of the wing will help. A bird's wing size is in direct proportion to its body size, weight and type of flying. The shape of the wing determines if the bird flies fast and with precision, or slowly and less precisely. Birds such as House Finches, which flit around in thick tangles of branches, have short, round wings. Birds that soar on warm updrafts of air, such as Turkey Vultures, have long, broad wings. Barn Swallows have short, pointed wings that slice through the air, propelling their swift and accurate flight.



Turkey Vulture in flight

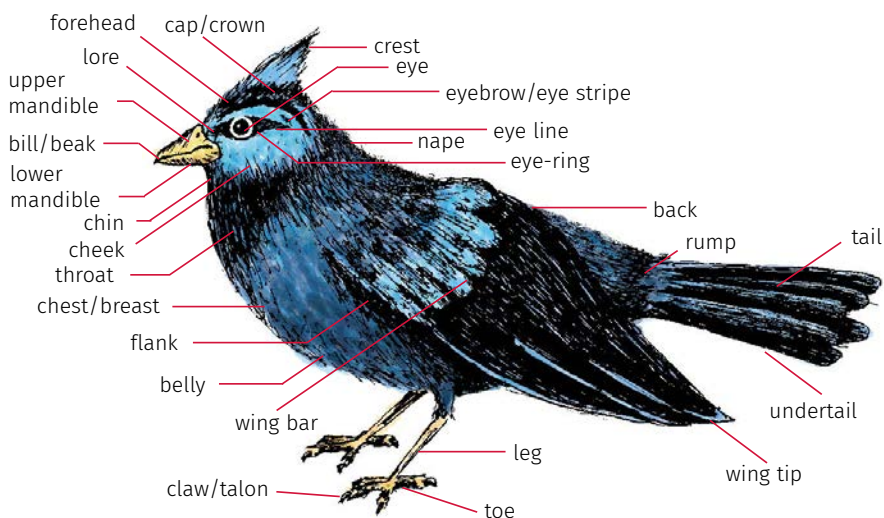
Some birds have unique flight patterns that aid in identification. American Goldfinches fly in a distinctive up-and-down pattern that makes it look as if they are riding a roller coaster.

While it's not easy to make these observations in the short time you often have to watch a "mystery bird," practicing these methods of identification will greatly expand your skills in birding. Also, seek the guidance of a more experienced birder who will help you improve your skills and answer questions on the spot.

BIRD BASICS

It's easier to identify birds and communicate about them if you know the names of the different parts of a bird. For instance, it's more effective to use the word "crest" to indicate the set of extra long feathers on top of the head of a Northern Cardinal than to try to describe it.

The following illustration points out the basic parts of a bird. Because it is a composite of many birds, it shouldn't be confused with any actual bird.



Bird Color Variables

No other animal has a color palette like a bird's. Brilliant blues, lemon yellows, showy reds and iridescent greens are commonplace within the bird world. In general, the male birds are more colorful than their female counterparts. This is probably to help the male attract a mate, essentially saying, "Hey, look at me!" It also calls attention to the male's overall health. The better the condition of his feathers, the better his food source and territory, and therefore the better his potential for a mate.

Female birds that don't look like their male counterparts (such species are called sexually dimorphic, meaning "two forms") are often a nondescript color, as seen with the Indigo Bunting. These muted tones help hide the females during weeks of motionless incubation and draw less attention to them when they are out feeding or taking a break from the rigors of raising their young.

In some species, such as the Bald Eagle, Blue Jay and Downy Woodpecker, the male birds look nearly identical to the females. In the case of the woodpeckers, the sexes are only differentiated by a single red or sometimes yellow mark. Depending on the species, the mark may be on top of the head, face, nape of the neck or just behind the bill.

During the first year, juvenile birds often look like the mothers. Since brightly colored feathers are used mainly for attracting a mate, young non-breeding males don't have a need for colorful plumage. It is not until the first spring molt (or several years later, depending on the species) that young males obtain their breeding colors.

Both breeding and winter plumages are the result of molting. Molting is the process of dropping old worn feathers and replacing them with new ones. All birds molt, typically twice a year, with the spring molt usually occurring in late winter. During this time, most birds produce their breeding plumage (brighter colors for attracting mates), which lasts throughout the summer.

Winter plumage is the result of the late summer molt, which serves a couple of important functions. First, it adds feathers for warmth in the coming winter. Second, in some species it produces feathers that tend to be drab in color, which helps to camouflage the birds and hide them from predators. The winter plumage of the male American Goldfinch, for example, is an olive-brown, unlike its obvious canary-yellow color in summer. Luckily for us, some birds, such as Pileated Woodpeckers, retain their bright summer colors all year long.

Bird Nests

Bird nests are truly an amazing feat of engineering. Imagine building your home strong enough to weather a storm, large enough to hold your entire family, insulated enough to shelter them from cold and heat, and waterproof enough to keep out rain. Now, build it without any blueprints or directions, and without the use of your hands! Birds do this!

Before building a nest, an appropriate site must be selected. In some species, such as House Wrens, the male picks out several potential sites and assembles several small twigs in each. This discourages other birds from using nearby nest cavities. These “extra” nests are occasionally called dummy nests. The female is then taken around and shown all the choices. She chooses her favorite and finishes constructing the nest. In some other species of birds, such as the Baltimore Oriole, it is the female who chooses the site and builds the nest with the male offering only an occasional suggestion. Each species has its own nest-building routine, which is strictly followed.

Nesting material usually consists of natural elements found in the immediate area. Most nests consist of plant fibers (such as bark peeled from grapevines), sticks, mud, dried grass, feathers, fur or soft, fuzzy tufts from thistle. Some birds, including Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, use spiderwebs to glue nesting materials together. Nesting material is limited to what a bird can hold or carry. Because of this, a bird must make many trips afield to gather enough materials to complete its nest. Most nests take at least four days or more, and hundreds, if not thousands, of trips to build.

As you’ll see in the following illustrations, birds construct a wide variety of different nest types.



**ground
nest**



**platform
nest**



**cup
nest**



**pendulous
nest**



**cavity
nest**

The simple **ground nest** is scraped out of the earth. A shallow depression that usually contains no nesting material, it is made by birds such as the Killdeer and Horned Lark.

Another kind of nest, the **platform nest**, represents a more complex type of nest building. Constructed of small twigs and branches, the platform nest is a simple arrangement of sticks, which forms a platform and features a small depression to nestle the eggs.

Some platform nests, such as those of the Canada Goose, are constructed on the ground and are made with mud and grass. Platform nests can also be on cliffs, bridges, balconies or even in flowerpots. This kind of nest gives space to adventurous youngsters and functions as a landing platform for the parents. Many waterfowl construct platform nests on the ground, near or



Eastern Bluebird at cavity nest

actually in the water. **Floating platform nests** move up and down with the water level, preventing nests with eggs from being flooded. Platform nests, constructed by such birds as Mourning Doves and herons, are not anchored to the tree and may tumble from the branches during high winds and storms.

The **cup nest** is a modified platform nest, used by three-quarters of all songbirds. Constructed from the outside in, a supporting platform is constructed first. This platform is attached firmly to a tree, shrub, rock ledge or the ground. Next, the sides are constructed of grasses, small twigs, bark or leaves, which are woven together and often glued with mud for additional strength. The inner cup, lined with feathers, animal fur, soft plant material or animal hair, is constructed last. The mother bird uses her chest to cast the final contours of the inner nest.

The **pendulous nest** is an unusual nest, looking more like a sock hanging from a branch than a nest. Inaccessible to most predators, these nests are attached to the ends of the smallest branches of a tree and often wave wildly in the breeze. Woven very tightly of plant fibers, they are strong and watertight, taking up to a week to build. More commonly used by tropical birds, this complicated nest type has also been mastered by orioles and kinglets. A small opening on the top or side allows the parents access to the grass-lined interior. It must be one heck of a ride to be inside one of these nests during a windy spring thunderstorm!

Another type of nest, the **cavity nest**, is used by many birds, including woodpeckers and Eastern Bluebirds. The cavity nest is usually excavated in a tree branch or trunk and offers shelter from storms, sun, predators and cold. A relatively small entrance hole in a tree leads to an inner chamber up to 10 inches (25 cm) deep. Usually constructed by woodpeckers, the cavity nest is typically used only once by its builder, but it can subsequently be used for many years by birds such as bluebirds, which do not have the capability of excavating one for themselves. Kingfishers, on the other hand, excavate a tunnel up to 4 feet (1 m) long, which connects the entrance in a riverbank to the nest chamber. These cavity nests are often sparsely lined because they're already well insulated.

One of the most clever of all nest types is known as the **no nest** or daycare nest. Parasitic birds, such as Brown-headed Cowbirds, build no nests at all! The egg-laden female expertly searches out other birds' nests and sneaks

in to lay one of her own eggs while the host mother is not looking, thereby leaving the host mother to raise an adopted youngster. The mother cowbird wastes no energy building a nest only to have it raided by a predator. By using several nests of other birds, she spreads out her progeny so at least one of her offspring will live to maturity.

Some birds, including some swallows, take nest building one step further. They use a collection of small balls of mud to construct an adobe-style home. Constructed beneath the eaves of houses, under bridges or inside chimneys, some of these nests look like simple cup nests. Others are completely enclosed, with small tunnel-like openings that lead into a safe nesting chamber for the baby birds.

Who Builds the Nest?

In general, the female bird builds the nest. She gathers nesting materials and constructs a nest, with an occasional visit from her mate to check on the progress. In some species, both parents contribute equally to the construction of a nest. A male bird might forage for precisely the right sticks, grass or mud, but it's often the female that forms or puts together the nest. She uses her body to form the egg chamber. Rarely does the male build a nest by himself.

Fledging

Fledging is the interval between hatching and flight or leaving the nest. Some birds leave the nest within hours of hatching (precocial), but it might be weeks before they are able to fly. This is common with waterfowl and shorebirds. Until they start to fly, they are called fledglings. Birds that are still in the nest are called nestlings. Other baby birds are born naked and blind, and remain in the nest for several weeks (altricial).

Why Birds Migrate

Why do birds migrate? The short answer is simple—food. Birds migrate to areas with high concentrations of food, as it is easier to breed where food is than where it is not. A typical migrating bird—the Summer Tanager, for instance—will migrate from the tropics of Central America and Mexico to nest in forests of North America, taking advantage of billions of newly hatched insects to feed its young. This trip is called **complete migration**.

Complete migrators have a set time and pattern of migration. Each year at nearly the same time, they take off and head for a specific wintering ground. Complete migrators may travel great distances, sometimes as many as 15,000 miles (24,150 km) or more in a year. But complete migration doesn't necessarily imply flying from the cold, frozen northland to a tropical destination. The



Snow Geese migrating

Rough-legged Hawk, for example, is a complete migrator that flies from the High Arctic to the Midwest each winter. This is still called complete migration.

There are many interesting aspects to complete migrators. In the spring, males usually migrate several weeks before the females, arriving early to scope out possibilities for nesting sites and food sources, and to begin to defend territories. The females arrive several weeks later. In the autumn, in many species, the females and their young leave early, often up to four weeks before the adult males.

All migrators are not the same type. **Partial migrators**, such as American Goldfinches, usually wait until the food supply dwindles before flying south. Unlike complete migrators, the partial migrators move only far enough south, or sometimes east and west, to find abundant food. In some years it might be only a few hundred miles, while in other years it might be nearly a thousand. This kind of migration, dependent on the weather and available food, is sometimes called seasonal movement.

Unlike the predictable ebbing and flowing behavior of complete migrators or partial migrators, **irruptive migrators** can move every third to fifth year or, in some cases, in consecutive years. These migrations are triggered when times are really tough and food is scarce. Red-breasted Nuthatches are a good example of irruptive migrators, because they leave their normal northern range in search of food or in response to overpopulation.

How Do Birds Migrate?

One of the many secrets of migration is fat. While we humans are fighting the battle of the bulge, birds intentionally gorge themselves to put on as much fat as possible while still being able to fly. Fat provides the greatest amount of energy per unit of weight, and in the same way that your car needs gas, birds are propelled by fat and stalled without it.

During long migratory flights, fat deposits are used up quickly, and birds need to stop to “refuel.” This is when backyard bird feeding stations and undeveloped, natural spaces around our towns and cities are especially important. Some birds require up to two to three days of constant feeding to build up their fat reserves before continuing their seasonal trip.

Some birds, such as most eagles, hawks, falcons and vultures, migrate during the day. Larger birds can hold more body fat, go longer without eating and take longer to migrate. These birds glide on rising columns of warm air, called thermals, which hold them aloft while they slowly make their way north or south. They generally rest during nights and hunt early in the morning before the sun has a chance to warm up the land and create good soaring conditions. Birds migrating during the day use a combination of landforms, rivers and the rising and setting sun to guide them in the right direction.

Most other birds migrate during the night. Studies show that some birds that migrate at night use the stars to navigate. Others use the setting sun, while still others, such as doves, use the planet’s magnetic field to guide them north or south. While flying at night might seem like a crazy idea, nocturnal migration is safer for several reasons. First, there are fewer nighttime predators for migrating birds. Second, traveling at night allows time during the day to find food in unfamiliar surroundings. Finally, nighttime wind patterns tend to be flat, or laminar. These flat winds don’t have the turbulence associated with the daytime winds and can actually help carry smaller birds by pushing them along.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

To help you quickly and easily identify birds, this book is organized by color. Simply note the color of the bird and turn to that section. Refer to the first page for the color key. The Pileated Woodpecker, for example, is black and white with red on its head. Because the bird is mostly black and white, it will

be found in the black and white section. Each color section is also arranged by size, generally with smaller birds first. Sections may also incorporate the average size in a range, which, in some cases, reflects size differences between male and female birds. Flip through the pages in that color section to find the bird. If you already know the name of the bird, check the index for the page number. In some species, the male and female are remarkably different in color. In these cases, the opposite sex is shown in a smaller inset photograph with a page reference. These birds, therefore, will be found in two different color sections.

In the description section you will find a variety of information about the bird. On pages 20–21 is a sample of the information included in the book.

Range Maps

Range maps are included for each bird. Colored areas indicate where in the Midwest a particular bird is most likely to be found. The colors represent the approximate presence of a species during a specific season, not the density or amount of birds in the area. Green is used for summer, blue for winter, red for year-round and yellow for areas where the bird is seen during migration. While every effort has been made to accurately depict these ranges, they are only general guidelines. Ranges actually change on an ongoing basis due to a variety of factors. Changes in weather, species abundance, landscape and vital resources such as the availability of food and water can affect local populations, migration and movements, causing birds to be found in areas that are atypical for the species.

Colored areas simply mean bird sightings for that species have been frequent in those areas and less frequent in the others. Please use the maps as intended—as general guides only.

MIDWEST BIRDING HOT SPOTS

(check online for best viewing seasons, hours, and other details)

Illinois

- 1 Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary (waterfowl, songbirds)
- 2 Midewin National Tall Grass Prairie (prairie birds, raptors)
- 3 Carlyle Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area (waterfowl, songbirds, shorebirds)

Indiana

- 4 Indiana Dunes State Park (shorebirds, waterfowl, rarities)
- 5 Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge (waterfowl, songbirds)
- 6 Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area (cranes, shorebirds)

Iowa

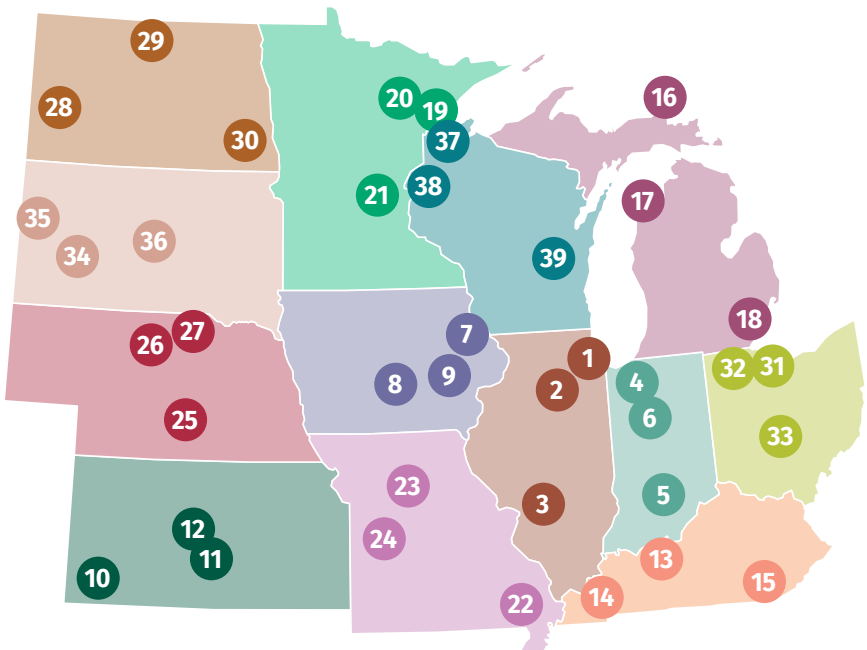
- 7 Eagle Point Park (eagles, waterfowl)
- 8 Saylorville Lake (songbirds, waterfowl)
- 9 Coralville Reservoir (raptors, shorebirds)

Kansas

- 10 Cimarron National Grassland (prairie birds, songbirds)
- 11 Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors)
- 12 Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve (shorebirds, waterfowl)

Kentucky

- 13 Mammoth Cave National Park (songbirds)
- 14 John James Audubon State Park (songbirds, waterfowl)
- 15 Cumberland Gap National Historical Park (songbirds, raptors)



Michigan

- 16 Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (shorebirds, raptors)
- 17 Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (rarities, raptors, shorebirds)
- 18 Lake Erie Metropark (raptors, songbirds, waterfowl)

Minnesota

- 19 Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (raptors)
- 20 Sax-Zim Bog (songbirds, raptors, rarities)
- 21 Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge (shorebirds, waterfowl, songbirds)

Missouri

- 22 Mingo National Wildlife Refuge (waterfowl, shorebirds)
- 23 Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge (waterfowl, shorebirds, raptor)
- 24 Taberville Prairie Conservation Area (prairie birds)

Nebraska

- 25 Rowe Sanctuary (cranes, prairie birds)
- 26 Valentine National Wildlife Refuge (songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds)
- 27 Niobrara Valley Preserve (shorebirds, songbirds)

North Dakota

- 28 Theodore Roosevelt National Park (songbirds, raptors, cranes)
- 29 J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge (prairie birds, songbirds)
- 30 Sheyenne National Grassland (prairie birds, songbirds)

Ohio

- 31 Magee Marsh Wildlife Area (waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds)
- 32 Oak Openings Metropark (songbirds, raptors)
- 33 Green Lawn Cemetery (songbirds, raptors)

South Dakota

- 34 Badlands National Park (songbirds, raptors, prairie birds)
- 35 Spearfish Canyon (songbirds, raptors)
- 36 Oahe Downstream Recreation Area (raptors, songbirds)

Wisconsin

- 37 Wisconsin Point (shorebirds, raptors, waterfowl)
- 38 Crex Meadows Wildlife Area (shorebirds, waterfowl, songbirds)
- 39 Horicon Marsh (waterbirds, songbirds)

MIDWEST STATE BIRDS

Illinois State Bird

NORTHERN CARDINAL



Indiana State Bird

NORTHERN CARDINAL



Iowa State Bird

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH



Kansas State Bird

WESTERN MEADOWLARK



Kentucky State Bird

NORTHERN CARDINAL



Michigan State Bird

AMERICAN ROBIN



Minnesota State Bird

COMMON LOON



Missouri State Bird

EASTERN BLUEBIRD



MIDWEST STATE BIRDS

Nebraska State Bird

WESTERN MEADOWLARK



North Dakota State Bird

WESTERN MEADOWLARK



Ohio State Bird

NORTHERN CARDINAL



South Dakota State Bird

RING-NECKED PHEASANT



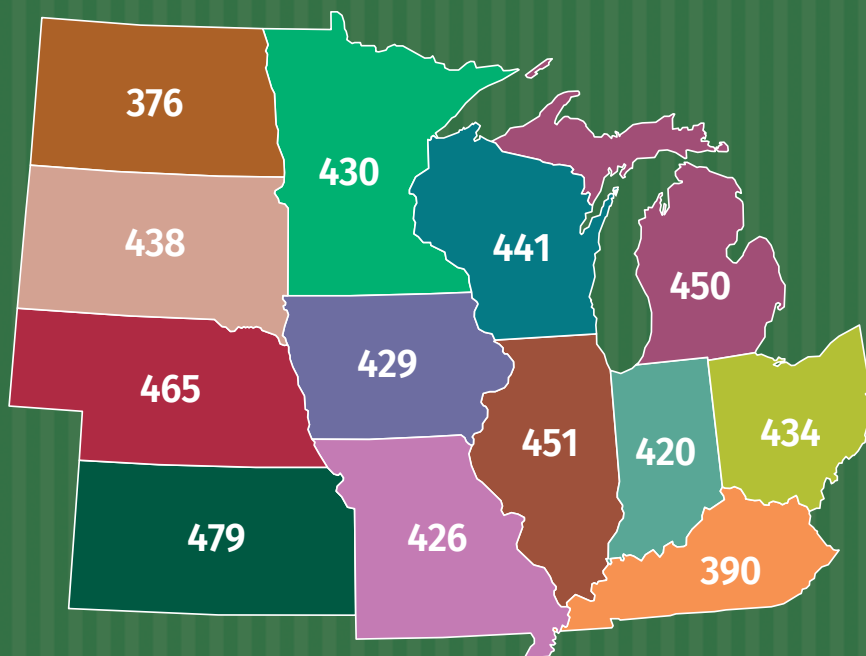
Wisconsin State Bird

AMERICAN ROBIN



MIDWEST BIRDING AT A GLANCE

Number of Species Reported in the State



MIDWEST BIRDING CALENDAR

From songbirds that return to nest each summer to the world-famous gatherings of sandhill cranes in Nebraska and elsewhere, the Midwest is blessed with great birding any time of year, and the region's birders like to celebrate that fact. The region hosts a variety of bird-centric events, with festivals and celebrations honoring raptors, cranes, migratory birds, and more. The list below only includes a sampling!

March

Nebraska Crane Festival, Rowe Sanctuary, Gibbon, NE
(sometimes occurs in April)

April

Spring Fling, Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Paradise, MI

May

Horicon Marsh Bird Festival, Horicon, WI
Indiana Dunes Birding Festival, Indiana Dunes National Park, IN

September

Hawk Weekend, Hawk Ridge, Duluth, MN

BIRD COUNTS AND COMMUNITY SCIENCE

BIRD COUNTS

Bird watching isn't just a fun pastime; your observations can actually help science. With habitat fragmentation and climate change harming bird populations, it's essential for biologists to have accurate, up-to-date population totals for birds, especially those that are potentially threatened or endangered.

But tracking birds is tricky; that's where two long-running bird-tracking programs—and you—come in. Think of each as a census for the birds. One is the **Christmas Bird Count**, which has been around for 120 years. Held from mid-December to early January, volunteers spread out to count birds in specific areas around each state and the country, with counts occurring in a local area for only one day. (So if you want to join in on the fun, prepare ahead of time!) For more information, visit: www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count

The **Great Backyard Bird Count** is similar, but it takes place everywhere, and you can participate if you bird for as little as 15 minutes, making it easy to join. It takes place in February. For details, see: www.birdcount.org



Participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count

COMMUNITY SCIENCE

You can also record the birds you find and contribute to science anytime by creating an account on sites such as eBird and iNaturalist.

eBird (eBird.org) is a wonderful resource for birders, with up-to-the-minute sighting reports and birding maps from around the world and from across the country. It's a great way to share your findings, find rare birds near you, and to get to know birding sites, and birders in your area.

iNaturalist (inaturalist.org) is an all-encompassing social network for naturalists. With a free account, you can log your finds (from birds to bugs and everything in between), get help with identifications from other users and help create real science. Scientists routinely use iNaturalist observations as data points in papers and other publications.



FIELD REPORT

 COLOR INDICATOR

Date/Time _____ Season _____

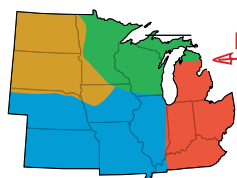
Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



RANGE MAP

Common Name

Scientific name

COLOR INDICATOR

YEAR-ROUND
MIGRATION
SUMMER
WINTER

Size: measures head to tail, may include wingspan

Male: a brief description of the male bird, and may include breeding, winter or other plumages

Female: a brief description of the female bird, which is sometimes not the same as the male

Juvenile: a brief description of the juvenile bird, which often looks like the female

Nest: the kind of nest this bird builds to raise its young; who builds the nest; how many broods per year

Eggs: how many eggs you might expect to see in a nest; color and marking

Incubation: the average time parents spend incubating the eggs; who does the incubation

Fledging: the average time young spend in the nest after hatching but before they leave the nest; who does the most “childcare” and feeding

Migration: complete (consistent, seasonal), partial migrator (seasonal, destination varies), irruptive (unpredictable, depends on the food supply), non-migrator; additional comments

Food: what the bird eats most of the time (e.g., seeds, insects, fruit, nectar, small mammals, fish); if it typically comes to a bird feeding station

Compare: notes about other birds that look similar, and the pages on which they can be found

Stan’s Notes: Interesting gee-whiz natural history information. This could be something to look or listen for, or something to help positively identify the bird. Also includes remarkable features.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

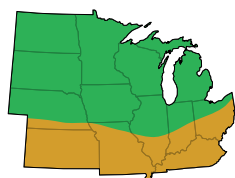
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MIGRATION
SUMMER

Bobolink

Dolichonyx oryzivorus

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Nearly all-black bird with a black chest and belly. Pale yellow on back of head and nape of neck. White patch on wings and rump.

Female: pale yellow with dark brown stripes on the head, thin dark line extends through the eye, dark streaks on back and sides

Juvenile: similar to female, lacking dark streaks

Nest: ground; scraped-out depression lined with grass; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–6; gray to red brown with brown markings

Incubation: 10–13 days; female incubates

Fledging: 10–14 days; female and male feed young

Migration: complete, to South America, mostly Brazil

Food: insects, seeds

Compare: Male Bobolink is similar in size to the male Red-winged Blackbird (p. 29) but lacks the red-and-yellow wing bars. Look for yellow on the head, a white patch on the wings and the black belly of male Bobolink.

Stan's Notes: A member of the blackbird family. Closely related to meadowlarks. A common bird of prairies, grasslands and open fields. In spring, the male will perch on plant stems and repeat its bubbling “bob-o-link” song (which provided the common name). Gives a loud, repeated “ink” whistle during flight. When disturbed, the female will run from her highly concealed ground nest before taking flight. By late summer, the males will have molted to a drab color similar to the females.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

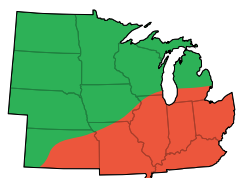
Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER

Brown-headed Cowbird

Molothrus ater

Size: 7½" (19 cm)

Male: Glossy black with a chocolate-brown head. Dark eyes. Pointed, sharp gray bill.

Female: dull brown with a pointed, sharp gray bill

Juvenile: similar to female but with dull-gray plumage and a streaked chest

Nest: no nest; lays eggs in nests of other birds

Eggs: 5–7; white with brown markings

Incubation: 10–13 days; host birds incubate eggs

Fledging: 10–11 days; host birds feed the young

Migration: complete, to non-migrator

Food: insects, seeds; will come to seed feeders

Compare: The male Red-winged Blackbird (p. 29) is slightly larger with red-and-yellow patches on upper wings. Common Grackle (p. 35) has a long tail and lacks the brown head. European Starling (p. 27) has a shorter tail.

Stan's Notes: Cowbirds are members of the blackbird family. Of approximately 750 species of parasitic birds worldwide, this is the only parasitic bird in the region. Brood parasites lay their eggs in the nests of other birds, leaving the host birds to raise their young. Cowbirds are known to have laid their eggs in the nests of over 200 species of birds. While some birds reject cowbird eggs, most incubate them and raise the young, even to the exclusion of their own. Look for warblers and other birds feeding young birds twice their own size. Named “Cowbird” for its habit of following bison and cattle herds to feed on insects flushed up by the animals.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE



FIELD REPORT

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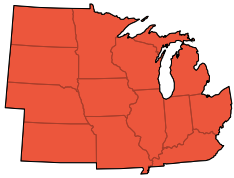
Location _____

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Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND

European Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

Size: 7½" (19 cm)

Male: Glittering, iridescent purplish black in spring and summer; duller and speckled with white in fall and winter. Long, pointed, yellow bill in spring; gray in fall. Pointed wings. Short tail.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adults, with grayish-brown plumage and a streaked chest

Nest: cavity; male and female line cavity;
2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–6; bluish with brown markings

Incubation: 12–14 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 18–20 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator; some will move to southern states

Food: insects, seeds, fruit; visits seed or suet feeders

Compare: The Common Grackle (p. 35) has a long tail. Male Brown-headed Cowbird (p. 25) has a brown head. Look for the shiny, dark feathers to help identify the European Starling.

Stan's Notes: One of our most numerous songbirds. Mimics the songs of up to 20 bird species and imitates sounds, including the human voice. Jaws are more powerful when opening than when closing, enabling the bird to pry open crevices to find insects. Often displaces woodpeckers, chickadees and other cavity-nesting birds. Large families gather with blackbirds in the fall. Not a native bird; 100 starlings were introduced to New York City in 1890–91 from Europe. Bill changes color in spring and fall.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

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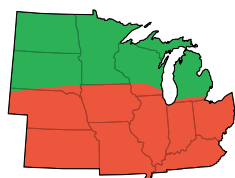
Notes _____

☐ MALE

☐ FEMALE

☐ JUVENILE

☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER

Red-winged Blackbird

Agelaius phoeniceus

Size: 8½" (22 cm)

Male: Jet black with red-and-yellow patches (epaulets) on upper wings. Pointed black bill.

Female: heavily streaked brown with a pointed brown bill and white eyebrows

Juvenile: same as female

Nest: cup; female builds; 2–3 broods per year

Eggs: 3–4; bluish green with brown markings

Incubation: 10–12 days; female incubates

Fledging: 11–14 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete to non-migrator; will move around to find food

Food: seeds, insects; visits seed and suet feeders

Compare: The male Brown-headed Cowbird (p. 25) is smaller and glossier and has a brown head. The bold red-and-yellow epaulets distinguish the male Red-winged from other blackbirds.

Stan's Notes: One of the most widespread and numerous birds in the Midwest. Found around marshes, wetlands, lakes and rivers. Flocks with as many as 10,000 birds have been reported. Migrating males arrive before the females and sing to defend their territory. The male repeats his call from the top of a cattail while showing off his red-and-yellow shoulder patches. The female chooses a mate and often builds her nest over shallow water in a thick stand of cattails. The male can be aggressive when defending the nest. Red-winged Blackbirds feed mostly on seeds in spring and fall, and insects throughout the summer.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



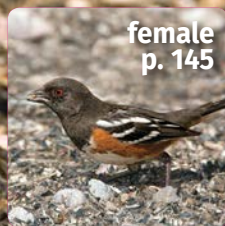
Eastern male



female
p. 145



Spotted male



female
p. 145

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

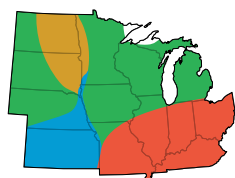
Notes _____

☐ MALE

☐ FEMALE

☐ JUVENILE

☐ NEST



Eastern and Spotted Towhee

Pipilo erythrophthalmus and Pipilo maculatus

Size: 8½" (22 cm)

Male: Mostly black with dirty red-brown sides and a white belly. Long black tail with a white tip. Rich, red eyes. White wing patches flash in flight. Spotted Towhee has multiple white spots on wings and sides.

Female: very similar to male of species, but Eastern female is brown instead of black, and Spotted female has a brown head

Juvenile: brown with a heavily streaked chest

Nest: cup; female builds; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 3–5; white with brown markings

Incubation: 12–14 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 10–12 days; female and male feed young

Migration: complete to non-migrator

Food: seeds, fruit, insects

Compare: American Robin (p. 269) is larger. Male Rose-breasted Grosbeak (p. 57) has a rosy patch in center of chest.

Stan's Notes: Summer visitor in the Upper Midwest. Found in a variety of habitats from thick brush and forest edges to suburban backyards. Usually heard noisily scratching through dead leaves on the ground for food. Over 70 percent of its diet is plant material. Eats more insects during spring and summer. Well known to retreat from danger by walking away rather than taking to flight. Nest is nearly always on the ground under bushes but away from where the male perches to sing. Song and plumage vary geographically and aren't well studied or understood.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



male

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

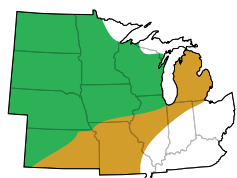
Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE
 ☐ FEMALE
 ☐ JUVENILE
 ☐ NEST



MIGRATION
SUMMER

Yellow-headed Blackbird

Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus

Size: 9–11" (23–28 cm)

Male: Large black bird with a lemon-yellow head, breast and nape of neck. Black mask and gray bill. White wing patches.

Female: similar to male but slightly smaller with a brown body and dull-yellow head and chest

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 2 broods per year

Eggs: 3–5; greenish white with brown markings

Incubation: 11–13 days; female incubates

Fledging: 9–12 days; female feeds the young

Migration: complete, to southern states and Mexico

Food: insects, seeds; will come to ground feeders

Compare: The male Red-winged Blackbird (p. 29) is smaller and has red-and-yellow patches on its wings. Look for the bright-yellow head to identify the male Yellow-headed.

Stan's Notes: Found around marshes, wetlands and lakes. Nests in deep water, unlike its cousin, the Red-winged Blackbird, which prefers shallow water. Usually heard before seen. Gives a raspy, low, metallic-sounding call. The male is the only large black bird with a bright-yellow head. He gives an impressive mating display, flying with his head drooped and feet and tail pointing down while steadily beating his wings. Young keep low and out of sight for up to three weeks before they start to fly. Migrates in large flocks of as many as 200 birds, often with Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds. Flocks of mainly males return in late March and early April; females return later. Most colonies consist of 20–100 nests.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

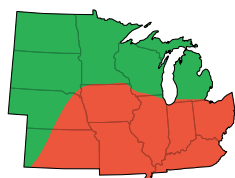
Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER

Common Grackle

Quiscalus quiscula

Size: 11–13" (28–33 cm)

Male: Large, iridescent blackbird with bluish-black head and purplish-brown body. Long black tail. Long, thin bill and bright-golden eyes.

Female: similar to male but smaller and duller

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–5; greenish white with brown markings

Incubation: 13–14 days; female incubates

Fledging: 16–20 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete migrator to partial, to southern states; will move around to find food

Food: fruit, seeds, insects; will come to seed and suet feeders

Compare: The European Starling (p. 27) is much smaller with a speckled appearance, and a yellow bill during breeding season. Male Red-winged Blackbird (p. 29) has red-and-yellow wing markings (epaulets).

Stan's Notes: Usually nests in small colonies of up to 75 pairs but travels with other blackbird species in large flocks. Known to feed in farm fields. The common name is derived from the Latin word *gracula*, meaning “jackdaw,” another species of bird and a term that can refer to any bird in the *Quiscalus* genus. The male holds his tail in a deep V shape during flight. The flight pattern is usually level, as opposed to an undulating movement. Unlike most birds, it has larger muscles for opening its mouth than for closing it, enabling it to pry crevices apart to find hidden insects.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

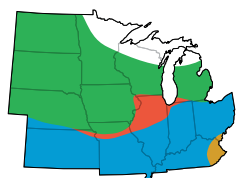
Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND
MIGRATION
SUMMER
WINTER

American Coot

Fulica americana

Size: 13–16" (33–40 cm)

Male: Gray-to-black waterbird. Duck-like white bill with a dark band near the tip and a small red patch near the eyes. Small white patch near base of tail. Green legs and feet. Red eyes.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: much paler than adults, with a gray bill

Nest: floating platform; female and male construct; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 9–12; pinkish buff with brown markings

Incubation: 21–25 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 49–52 days; female and male feed young

Migration: complete, to southern Midwest and southern states; non-migrator in some parts of the Midwest

Food: insects, aquatic plants

Compare: Smaller than most waterfowl, it is the only black, duck-like bird with a white bill.

Stan's Notes: Usually seen in large flocks on open water. Not a duck, as it has large lobed toes instead of webbed feet. An excellent diver and swimmer, bobbing its head as it swims. A favorite food of Bald Eagles. It is not often seen in flight, unless it's trying to escape from an eagle. To take off, it scrambles across the surface of the water, flapping its wings. Gives a unique series of creaks, groans and clicks. Anchors its floating platform nest to vegetation. Huge flocks with as many as 1,000 birds gather for migration. Migrates at night. The common name "Coot" comes from the Middle English word *coote*, which was used to describe various waterfowl. Also called Mud Hen.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



male

female
p. 187

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

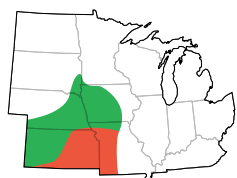
Notes _____

☐ MALE

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☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER

Great-tailed Grackle

Quiscalus mexicanus

Size: 18" (45 cm), male
15" (38 cm), female

Male: Large, all-black bird with iridescent purple sheen on the head and back. Exceptionally long tail. Bright-yellow eyes.

Female: considerably smaller than the male, overall brown bird with gray-to-brown belly, light-brown-to-white eyes, eyebrows, throat and upper chest

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 1-2 broods per year

Eggs: 3-5; greenish blue with brown markings

Incubation: 12-14 days; female incubates

Fledging: 21-23 days; female feeds young

Migration: partial to non-migrator; will move around to find food

Food: insects, fruit, seeds; comes to seed feeders

Compare: Common Grackle (p. 35) is smaller, with a much shorter tail. Male Brown-headed Cowbird (p. 25) lacks the long tail and has a brown head.

Stan's Notes: This is the Midwest's largest grackle. It was once considered a subspecies of the Boat-tailed Grackle, which occurs along the East and Gulf Coasts and in Florida. A colony nester. Males do not participate in nest building, incubation or raising young. Males rarely fight; females squabble over nest sites and materials. Several females mate with one male. The species is expanding northward, moving into northern states. Western populations tend to be larger than eastern. Song varies from population to population.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

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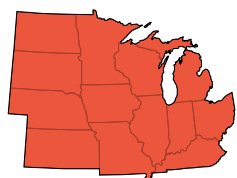
Notes _____

☐ MALE

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☐ JUVENILE

☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND

American Crow

Corvus brachyrhynchos

Size: 18" (45 cm)

Male: All-black bird with black bill, legs and feet. Can have a purple sheen in direct sunlight.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: same as adult

Nest: platform; female builds; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–6; bluish to olive-green with brown marks

Incubation: 18 days; female incubates

Fledging: 28–35 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator, moves around to find food

Food: fruit, insects, mammals, fish, carrion; will come to seed and suet feeders

Compare: Common Raven (p. 43) is similar, but has a larger bill and shaggy throat feathers. Crow's call is higher than the raven's raspy, low call. Crow has a squared tail. Ravens have wedge-shaped tails, apparent in flight. Black-billed Magpie (p. 81) has a long tail and white belly.

Stan's Notes: One of the most recognizable birds in the Midwest, found in most habitats. Imitates other birds and human voices. One of the smartest of all birds and very social, often entertaining itself by provoking chases with other birds. Eats roadkill but is rarely hit by vehicles. Can live as long as 20 years. Often reuses its nest every year if it's not taken over by a Great Horned Owl. Unmated birds, known as helpers, help to raise the young. Extended families roost together at night, dispersing daily to hunt. Cannot soar on thermals; flaps constantly and glides downward. Gathers in huge communal flocks of up to 10,000 birds in winter.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND

Common Raven

Corvus corax

Size: 22–27" (56–69 cm)

Male: Large all-black bird with a shaggy beard of feathers on throat and chin. Large black bill. Large wedge-shaped tail, best seen in flight.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: same as adult

Nest: platform; female and male construct; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–6; pale green with brown markings

Incubation: 18–21 days; female incubates

Fledging: 38–44 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator to partial; will move around in search of food

Food: insects, fruit, small animals, carrion

Compare: American Crow (p. 41) is smaller and lacks the shaggy throat feathers. Glides on flat outstretched wings, compared to the slightly V-shaped pattern of the American Crow. Low raspy call, compared with the higher-pitched call of the American Crow.

Stan's Notes: Considered by some people to be the smartest of all birds. Known for its aerial acrobatics and long swooping dives. Soars on wind without flapping, like a raptor. Sometimes scavenges with crows and gulls. A cooperative hunter that often communicates the location of a good source of food to other ravens. Most start to breed at 3–4 years. Complex courtship includes grabbing bills, preening each other and cooing. Long-term pair bond. Uses the same nest site for many years. Has huge vocal range, making all sorts of popping and gargling sounds.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

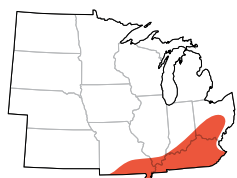
Location _____

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 ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND

Black Vulture

Coragyps atratus

Size: 25–28" (63–71 cm); up to 5¼' wingspan

Male: Black with dark-gray head and legs. Short tail. In flight, all black with light-gray wing tips.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adults

Nest: no nest, on a stump or on the ground, or takes an abandoned nest; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 1–3; light green with dark markings

Incubation: 37–45 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 75–80 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator; moves around in winter to find food

Food: carrion; occasionally will capture small live mammals

Compare: Slightly smaller than the Turkey Vulture (p. 47) and lacking its bright-red head. The Turkey Vulture has two-toned wings with a black leading edge and light-gray trailing edge. The Turkey Vulture also has longer wings and a longer tail.

Stan's Notes: Also called Black Buzzard. A more gregarious bird than the Turkey Vulture. In flight, the Black Vulture holds its wings straight out to its sides, unlike the Turkey Vulture, which holds its wings in a V pattern. More aggressive while feeding but less skilled at finding carrion than the Turkey Vulture; it is thought the Black Vulture's sense of smell is less developed. Families stay together up to a year. Often nests and roosts with other Black Vultures. If startled, especially at the nest, it regurgitates with power and accuracy.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

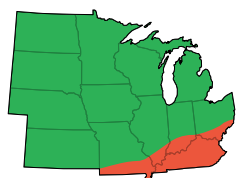
Location _____

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Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE
 ☐ FEMALE
 ☐ JUVENILE
 ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER

Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aura

Size: 26–32" (66–80 cm); up to 6' wingspan

Male: Large and black with a naked red head and legs. In flight, wings are two-toned with a black leading edge and a gray trailing edge. Wing tips end in finger-like projections. Tail is long and squared. Ivory bill.

Female: same as male but slightly smaller

Juvenile: similar to adults, with a gray-to-blackish head and bill

Nest: no nest or minimal nest, on a cliff or in a cave, sometimes in a hollow tree; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 1–3; white with brown markings

Incubation: 38–41 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 66–88 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to southern states, Mexico and Central and South America; non-migrator in southern portion of the Midwest

Food: carrion; parents regurgitate to feed the young

Compare: Bald Eagle (p. 89) is larger and lacks two-toned wings. Look for the obvious naked red head to identify the Turkey Vulture.

Stan's Notes: The naked head reduces the risk of feather fouling (picking up diseases) from contact with carcasses. It has a strong bill for tearing apart flesh. Unlike hawks and eagles, it has weak feet more suited for walking than grasping. One of the few birds with a developed sense of smell. Mostly mute, making only grunts and groans. Holds its wings in an upright V shape in flight. Teeters from wing tip to wing tip as it soars and hovers. Seen in trees with wings outstretched, sunning itself and drying after a rain.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

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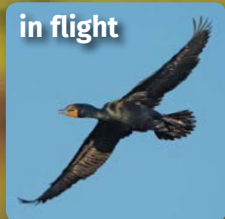
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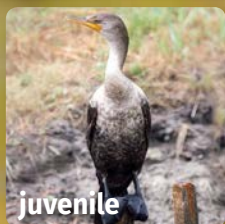
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in flight



juvenile



crests



drying



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

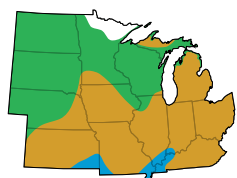
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



MIGRATION
SUMMER
WINTER

Double-crested Cormorant

Phalacrocorax auritus

Size: 31–35" (79–89 cm); up to 4½' wingspan

Male: Large black waterbird with unusual blue eyes and a long, snake-like neck. Large gray bill, with yellow at the base and a hooked tip.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: lighter brown with a grayish chest and neck

Nest: platform; male and female construct; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–4; bluish white without markings

Incubation: 25–29 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 37–42 days; male and female feed the young

Migration: complete, to southern states, Mexico and Central America

Food: small fish, aquatic insects

Compare: The Turkey Vulture (p. 47) is similar in size and also perches on branches with wings open to dry in sun, but it has a naked red head. American Coot (p. 37) is half the size and lacks the Cormorant's long neck and long pointed bill.

Stan's Notes: Flocks fly in a large V or a line. Swims underwater to catch fish, holding its wings at its sides. This bird's outer feathers soak up water, but its body feathers don't. To dry off, it strikes an upright pose with wings outstretched, facing the sun. Gives grunts, pops and groans. Named "Double-crested" for the crests on its head, which are not often seen. "Cormorant" is a contraction from *corvus marinus*, meaning "crow" or "raven," and "of the sea." They propel themselves underwater mainly with just their feet. There are 42 species of cormorant in the world; 6 are found in North America.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

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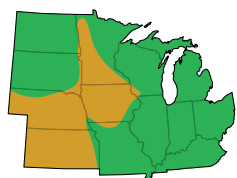
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Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



Black-and-white Warbler

Mniotilta varia

Size: 5" (13 cm)

Male: Small with zebra-like striping and a black-and-white striped crown. Black cheek patch and chin. White belly.

Female: duller than male and lacks a black cheek patch and chin

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–5; white with brown markings

Incubation: 10–11 days; female incubates

Fledging: 9–12 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to Florida, Mexico, and Central and South America

Food: insects

Compare: Climbs down tree trunks headfirst, like the White-breasted Nuthatch (p. 251) and Red-breasted Nuthatch (p. 243). Look for a small black-and-white bird climbing down trees to identify the Black-and-white Warbler.

Stan's Notes: This is the only warbler species that moves down tree trunks headfirst. Look for it searching for insect eggs in the bark of large trees. Its song sounds like a slowly turning, squeaky wheel going around and around. Female performs a distraction dance to draw predators away from the nest. Constructs its nest on the ground, concealing it under dead leaves or at the base of a tree. Found in a variety of habitats. Common summer resident that nests throughout much of the Midwest. More conspicuous during migration. Most arrive in April and May and leave by September.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

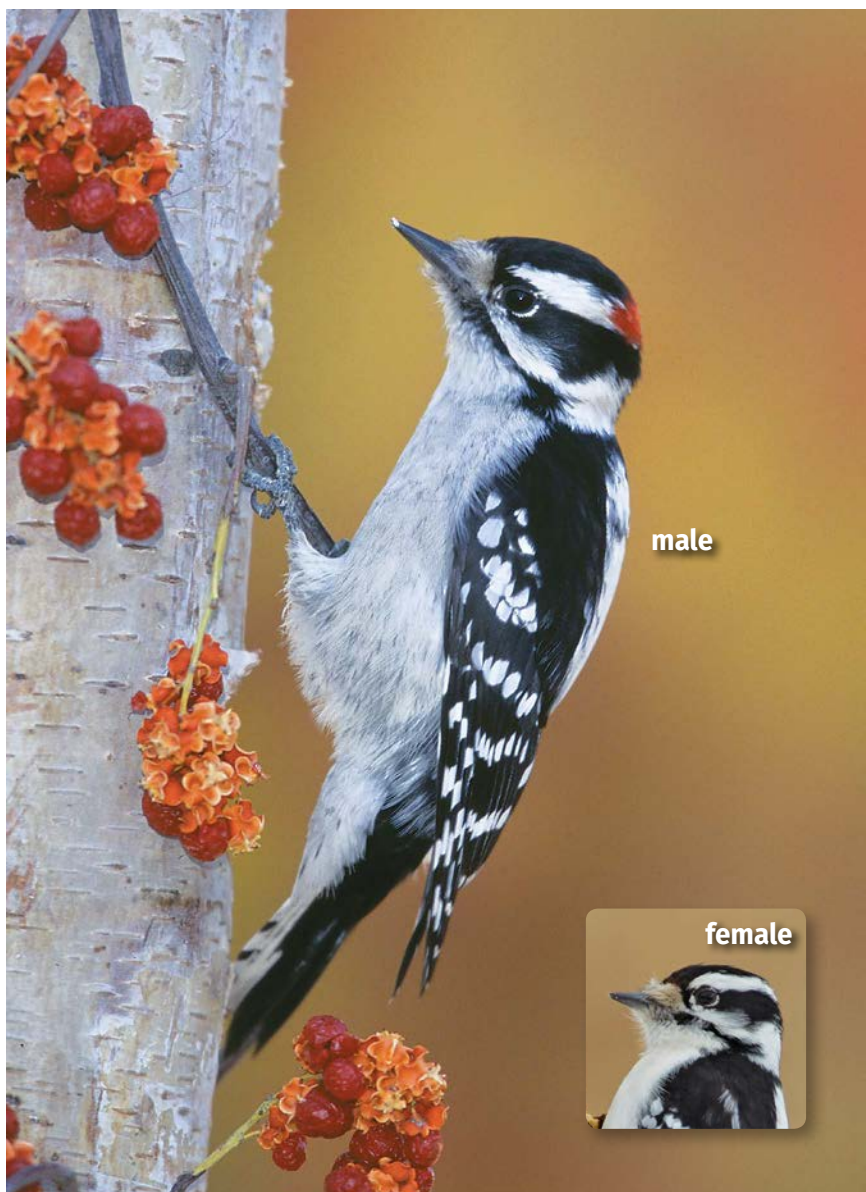
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



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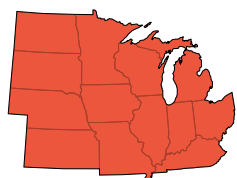
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND

Downy Woodpecker

Dryobates pubescens

Size: 6½" (15 cm)

Male: Small woodpecker with a white belly and black-and-white spotted wings. Red mark on the back of the head and a white stripe down the back. Short black bill.

Female: same as male but lacks the red mark

Juvenile: same as female, some with a red mark near the forehead

Nest: cavity with a round entrance hole; male and female excavate; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–5; white without markings

Incubation: 11–12 days; female incubates during the day, male incubates at night

Fledging: 20–25 days; male and female feed the young

Migration: non-migrator

Food: insects, seeds; visits seed and suet feeders

Compare: The Hairy Woodpecker (p. 61) is larger. Look for the Downy's shorter, thinner bill.

Stan's Notes: Abundant and widespread where trees are present. This is perhaps the most common woodpecker in the U.S. Stiff tail feathers help to brace it like a tripod as it clings to a tree. Like other woodpeckers, it has a long, barbed tongue to pull insects from tiny places. Mates drum on branches or hollow logs to announce territory, which is rarely larger than 5 acres (2 ha). Repeats a high-pitched "peek-peek" call. Nest cavity is wider at the bottom than at the top and is lined with fallen wood chips. Male performs most of the brooding. During winter, it will roost in a cavity. Doesn't breed in high elevations but often moves there in winter for food. Undulates in flight.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

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Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

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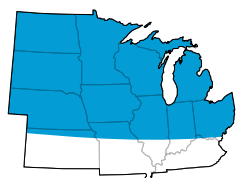
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



WINTER

Snow Bunting

Plectrophenax nivalis

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Winter male has a white chin, breast and belly, and rusty brown head, back and shoulders. Small yellow bill. Black legs and feet. Breeding male is overall white with black-and-white wings.

Female: similar to breeding male, but lacks the all-white head

Juvenile: similar to winter male

Nest: cavity; female builds; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–7; green to blue with brown markings

Incubation: 10–16 days; female incubates

Fledging: 10–17 days; male and female feed young

Migration: complete to northern states

Food: insects, seeds

Compare: This bird is easy to identify since no other small sparrow-like bird has so much white.

Stan's Notes: A winter resident of the Midwest. Often feeds on the ground along roads. Usually seen in flocks of up to 30 individuals of mixed ages and sexes. Individual Snow Buntings appear slightly different from each other; some are completely black and white, others are a combination of black, white, brown and rust. Winter plumage is seen from September to March. Sometimes seen with other winter birds such as Horned Larks. Female constructs a grass and moss nest in a cavity or on a cliff that is well protected from the weather. Young hatch at different times, so some leave the nest before others.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



male



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

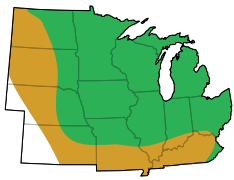
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 ☐ NEST



MIGRATION
SUMMER

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Pheucticus ludovicianus

Size: 7–8" (18–20 cm)

Male: Plump black-and-white bird with a large triangular, rose-colored patch on the breast. Wing linings are rose-red. Large ivory bill.

Female: heavily streaked with obvious white eyebrows and orange-to-yellow wing linings

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female and male construct; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 3–5; blue-green with brown markings

Incubation: 13–14 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 9–12 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to Mexico, Central America and South America

Food: insects, seeds, fruit; comes to seed feeders

Compare: Male is very distinctive, with no look-alikes. Look for the rose breast patch to identify.

Stan's Notes: A summer resident, but more conspicuous when in small groups during spring and autumn migrations. Prefers a mature deciduous forest for nesting. Both sexes sing, but the male sings much louder and clearer. Sings a rich, robin-like song with a chip note in the tune. "Grosbeak" refers to the thick, strong bill, which is used to crush seeds. The rose patch varies in size and shape in each male. Males have white wing patches that flash during flight. Males arrive at the breeding grounds a few days before the females. Several males will come to seed feeders together in spring. When the females arrive, males become territorial and reduce their feeder visits. After fledging, young grosbeaks visit feeders with the adults.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

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Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

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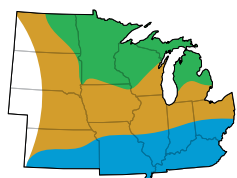
Notes _____

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☐ NEST



MIGRATION
SUMMER
WINTER

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Sphyrapicus varius

Size: 8–9" (20–23 cm)

Male: Checkered back with a red forehead, crown and chin. Yellow to tan on the chest and belly. White wing patches are seen flashing in flight.

Female: similar to male but with a white chin

Juvenile: similar to female, dull brown and lacks any red marking

Nest: cavity; female and male excavate, often in a live tree; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 5–6; white without markings

Incubation: 12–13 days; female incubates during the day, male incubates at night

Fledging: 25–29 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete migrator, to southern states, Mexico and Central America

Food: insects, tree sap; comes to suet feeders

Compare: Similar to other woodpeckers, but the male is the only woodpecker with a red chin patch. Look for the red chin and crown to identify the male Sapsucker, and the white chin and red crown to identify the female.

Stan's Notes: Found in small woods, forests, and suburban and rural areas. Drills rows of holes in trees to bleed the sap. Oozing sap attracts bugs, which it also eats. Defends its sapping sites from other birds that try to drink from the taps. Does not suck sap; rather, it laps the sticky liquid with its long, bristly tongue. A quiet bird, it makes few vocalizations but will meow like a cat. Drums on hollow branches, but unlike other woodpeckers, its rhythm is irregular. Makes short, undulating flights with rapid wingbeats.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

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Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



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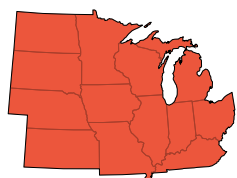
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND

Hairy Woodpecker

Leuconotopicus villosus

Size: 9" (23 cm)

Male: Black-and-white woodpecker with a white belly. Black wings with rows of white spots. White stripe down the back. Long black bill. Red mark on the back of the head.

Female: same as male but lacks the red mark

Juvenile: grayer version of the female

Nest: cavity with an oval entrance hole; female and male excavate; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–6; white without markings

Incubation: 11–15 days; female incubates during the day, male incubates at night

Fledging: 28–30 days; male and female feed the young

Migration: non-migrator

Food: insects, nuts, seeds; comes to seed and suet feeders

Compare: Downy Woodpecker (p. 53) is much smaller and has a much shorter bill. Look for Hairy Woodpecker's long bill.

Stan's Notes: A common bird in wooded backyards. Announces its arrival with a sharp chirp before landing on feeders. Responsible for eating many destructive forest insects. Uses its barbed tongue to extract insects from trees. Tiny, bristle-like feathers at the base of the bill protect the nostrils from wood dust. Drums on hollow logs, branches or stovepipes in spring to announce territory. Prefers to excavate nest cavities in live trees. Excavates a larger, more-oval-shaped entrance than the round entrance hole of the Downy Woodpecker. Makes short flights from tree to tree.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

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Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



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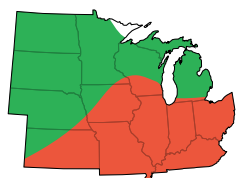
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER

Red-headed Woodpecker

Melanerpes erythrocephalus

Size: 9" (22.5 cm)

Male: All-red head with a solid black back. White chest, belly and rump. Black wings with large white wing patches seen flashing in flight. Black tail. Gray legs and bill.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: gray brown with white chest, lacks any red

Nest: cavity; male builds with help from female; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–5; white without markings

Incubation: 12–13 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 27–30 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete to non-migrator in parts of the Midwest; will move to areas with an abundant supply of nuts

Food: insects, nuts, fruit; visits suet and seed feeders

Compare: No other woodpecker in the region has an all-red head.

Stan's Notes: One of the few non-dimorphic woodpeckers, with males and females that look exactly alike. Bill is strong enough to excavate a nest cavity only in soft, dead trees. Prefers open woodlands or woodland edges with many dead or rotting branches. Unlike other woodpeckers, which use nest cavities just once briefly, it may use the same cavity for several years in a row. Often perches on top of dead snags. Stores acorns and other nuts. Gives a shrill, hoarse “churr” call. Was once the most common of woodpeckers and now is very uncommon to rare. Population decline near 90 percent.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

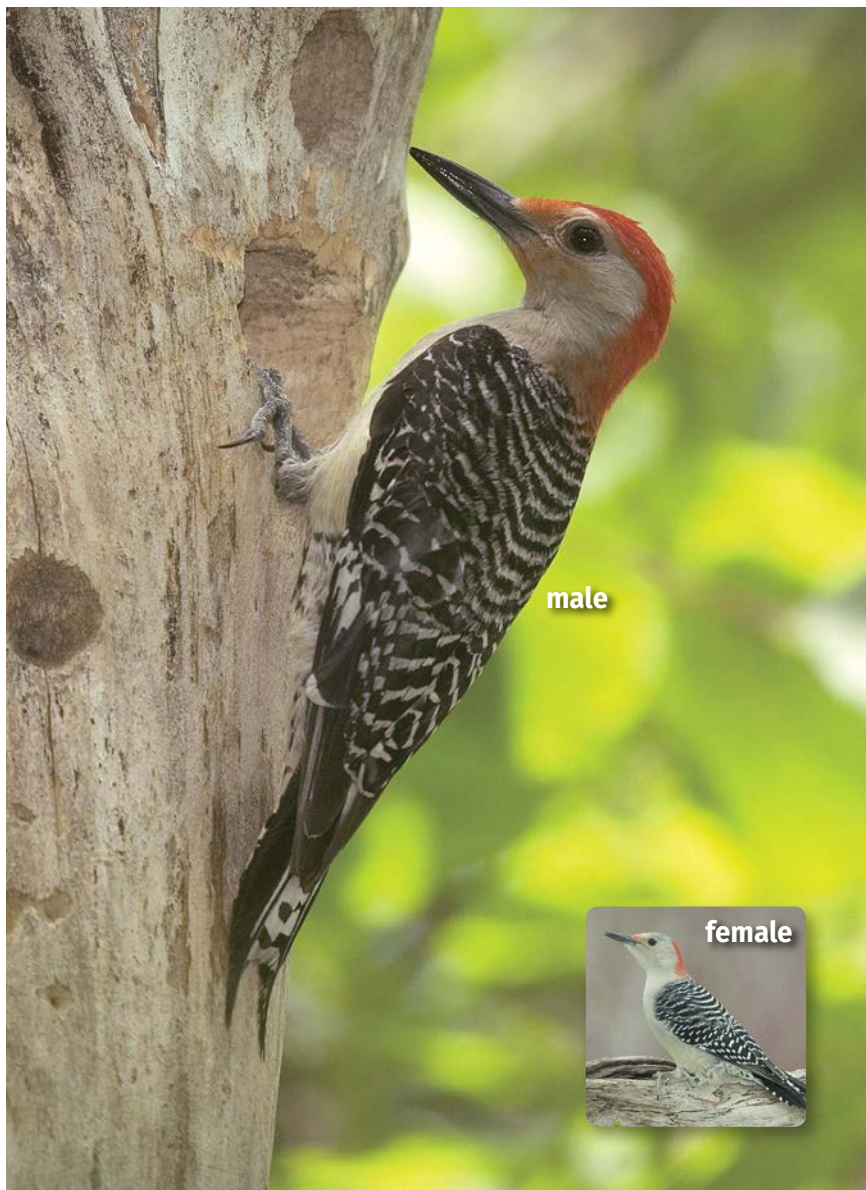
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



male

female

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

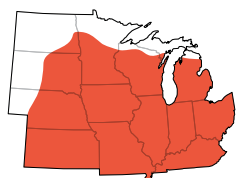
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Melanerpes carolinus

Size: 9–9½" (23–24 cm)

Male: Black-and-white “zebra-backed” woodpecker with a white rump. Red crown extends down the nape of the neck. Tan chest. Pale-red tinge on the belly, often hard to see.

Female: same as male but with a light-gray crown and a red nape

Juvenile: gray version of adults; lacks a red crown and red nape

Nest: cavity; female and male excavate; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–5; white without markings

Incubation: 12–14 days; female incubates during the day, male incubates at night

Fledging: 24–27 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator; moves around to find food

Food: insects, nuts, fruit; visits suet and seed feeders

Compare: Similar to the Northern Flicker (p. 183). Look for the zebra-striped back to help identify the Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Stan’s Notes: Likes shady woodlands, forest edges and backyards. Digs holes in rotten wood to find spiders, centipedes, beetles and more. Hammers acorns and berries into crevices of trees for winter food. Returns to the same tree to excavate a new nest below that of the previous year. Often kicked out of nest hole by European Starlings. Undulating flight with rapid wingbeats. Gives a loud “querrr” call and a low “chug-chug-chug.” Named for the pale-red tinge on its belly. Expanding its range all over the country.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

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Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



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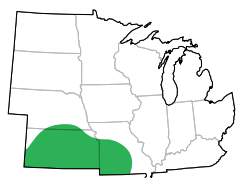
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☐ MALE
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 ☐ JUVENILE
 ☐ NEST



SUMMER

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Tyrannus forficatus

Size: 10" (24 cm)

Male: White-to-gray head, neck, breast and back. Black wings with bright-pink wing linings, seen in flight. Faint-pink coloring on flanks and belly. An extremely long, black tail with patches of white.

Female: similar to male, with a much shorter tail

Juvenile: similar to adults, with a shorter tail, lacking pink underwings and sides

Nest: cup; female builds; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–5; white with brown-and-red markings

Incubation: 14–17 days; female incubates

Fledging: 14–16 days; female and male feed young

Migration: complete, to Central and South America

Food: insects

Compare: This flycatcher's extremely long tail and the distinctive black-and-white pattern with its pink wing linings make it hard to confuse with any other bird.

Stan's Notes: A wonderful summer resident. Like most flycatchers, it hunts for insects by waiting on a post or low tree and flying out to capture them as they pass by. Drops to the ground to hunt for insects much more than other flycatchers. Male performs an up-down and zigzag courtship flight, showing off his long tail. Sometimes will end the flight with a reverse somersault. When not breeding, often seen in large flocks. Roosts communally, with up to 200 individuals. Closely related to kingbirds.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

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Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



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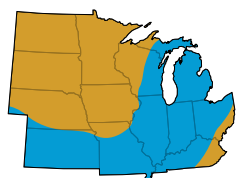
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



MIGRATION
WINTER

Bufflehead

Bucephala albeola

Size: 13–15" (33–38 cm)

Male: A small, striking duck with white sides and a black back. Greenish-purple head, iridescent in bright sun, with a large white head patch.

Female: brownish-gray with a dark-brown head and white cheek patch behind the eyes

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cavity; female lines an old woodpecker cavity; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 8–10; ivory-to-olive without markings

Incubation: 29–31 days; female incubates

Fledging: 50–55 days; female leads the young to food

Migration: complete, to most of the U.S. and to Mexico and Central America

Food: aquatic insects, crustaceans, mollusks

Compare: Male Hooded Merganser (p. 71) is larger and has rust-brown sides. Look for the large white bonnet-like patch on a greenish-purple head to help identify the male Bufflehead.

Stan's Notes: A small, common diving duck, almost always seen in small groups or with other duck species on rivers, ponds and lakes. Nests in vacant woodpecker holes. When cavities in trees are scarce, known to use a burrow in an earthen bank or will use a nest box. Lines the cavity with fluffy down feathers. Unlike other ducks, the young stay in the nest for up to two days before they venture out with their mothers. The female is very territorial and remains with the same mate for many years.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



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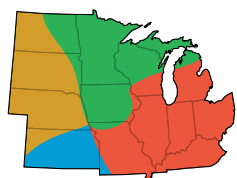
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND
MIGRATION
SUMMER
WINTER

Hooded Merganser

Lophodytes cucullatus

Size: 16–19" (40–48 cm)

Male: Black and white with rust-brown sides. Crest “hood” raises to show a large white patch on each side of the head. Long, thin, black bill.

Female: brown and rust with ragged, rust-red “hair” and a long, thin, brown bill

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cavity; female lines an old woodpecker cavity or a nest box near water; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 10–12; white without markings

Incubation: 32–33 days; female incubates

Fledging: 71 days; female feeds the young

Migration: complete in parts, non-migrator in southern portion of Midwest

Food: small fish, aquatic insects, crustaceans (especially crayfish)

Compare: Male Bufflehead (p. 69) is smaller than Hooded Merganser and has white sides. The male Wood Duck (p. 303) is similar in size, but it has a green head. The white patch on the head and rust-brown sides distinguish the male Hoodie.

Stan’s Notes: A small diving bird of shallow ponds, sloughs, lakes and rivers, usually in small groups. Quick, low flight across the water, with fast wingbeats. Male has a deep, rolling call. Female gives a hoarse quack. Nests in wooded areas. Female will lay some eggs in the nests of other Hooded Mergansers or Wood Ducks, resulting in 20–25 eggs in some nests. Rarely, she shares a nest, sitting with a Wood Duck.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

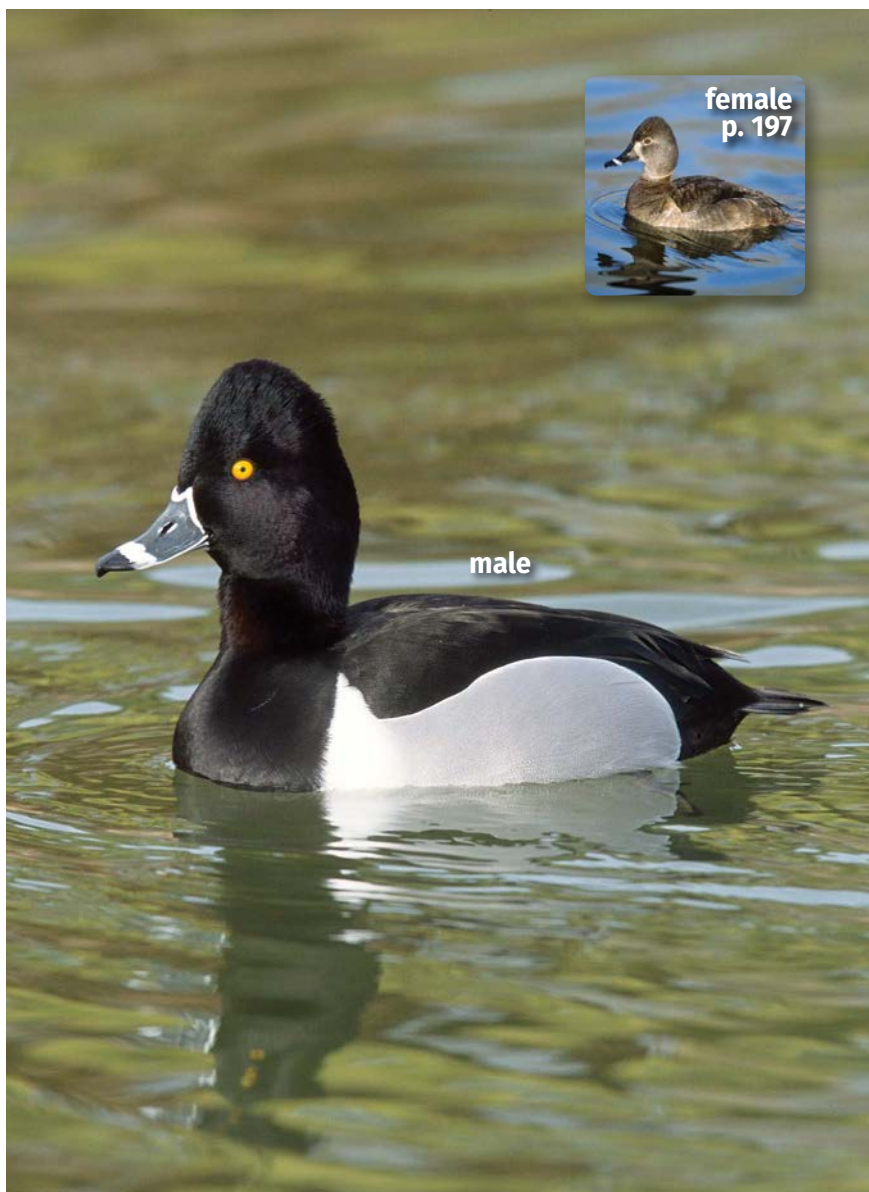
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



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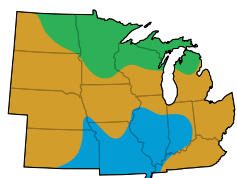
Notes _____

☐ MALE

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MIGRATION
SUMMER
WINTER

Ring-necked Duck

Aythya collaris

Size: 16–19" (41–48 cm)

Male: Striking black duck with light-gray-to-white sides. Blue bill with a bold white ring and a thinner ring at the base. Peaked head with a sloped forehead.

Female: brown with darker-brown back and crown, light-brown sides, gray face, white eye-ring, white ring around the bill, and peaked head

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: ground; female builds; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 8–10; olive-gray to brown without markings

Incubation: 26–27 days; female incubates

Fledging: 49–56 days; female teaches the young to feed

Migration: complete, to the southern Midwest, southern states, and Mexico

Food: aquatic plants and insects

Compare: Male Bufflehead (p. 69) is smaller and has a large white head patch. Look for the blue bill with a bold white ring to identify the male Ring-necked Duck.

Stan's Notes: Usually in larger freshwater lakes rather than marshes, in small flocks or just pairs. Watch for this diving duck to dive underwater to forage for food. Springs up off the water to take flight. Flattens its crown when diving. Male gives a quick series of grating barks and grunts. Female gives high-pitched peeps. Named “Ring-necked” for its cinnamon collar, which is nearly impossible to see in the field. Also called Ring-billed Duck due to the white ring on its bill.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

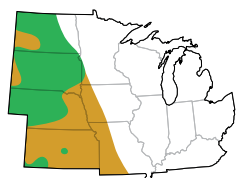
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MIGRATION
SUMMER

American Avocet

Recurvirostra americana

Size: 18" (45 cm)

Male: Black-and-white back, with a white belly. A long thin upturned bill and long gray legs. Rusty-red head and neck during breeding season, gray in winter.

Female: similar to male, more strongly upturned bill

Juvenile: similar to adults, slight wash of rusty red on the neck and head

Nest: ground; female and male construct; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–5; light olive with brown markings

Incubation: 22–29 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 28–35 days; female and male feed young

Migration: complete, to southern states, Mexico

Food: insects, crustaceans, aquatic vegetation, fruit

Compare: Look for the rusty-red head of breeding Avocet and the long upturned bill.

Stan's Notes: A handsome, long-legged bird that prefers shallow alkaline, saline or brackish water. Uses its upturned bill to sweep from side to side across mud bottoms in search of insects. Both the male and female have a brood patch to incubate eggs and brood their young. Nests in loose colonies of up to 20 pairs; all members defend against intruders together. Nests along shallow ponds.

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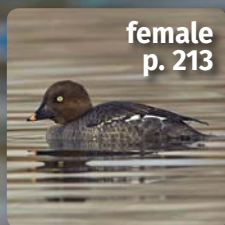
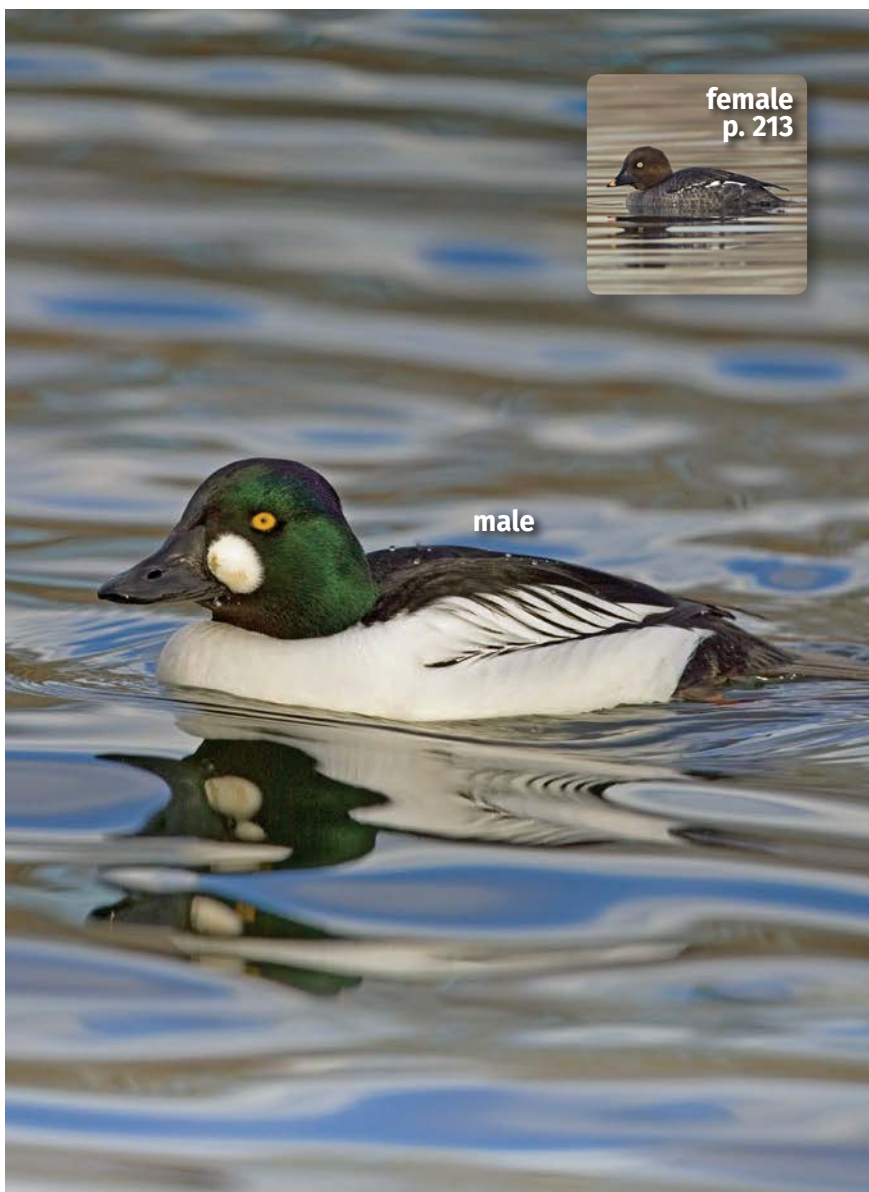
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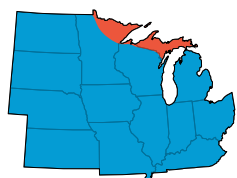
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YEAR-ROUND
WINTER

Common Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

Size: 18–20" (45–51 cm)

Male: Mostly white duck with a black back and a large, puffy, green head. Large white spot on the face. Bright-golden eyes. Dark bill.

Female: large dark-brown head with a gray body and a white collar, bright-golden eyes, yellow-tipped dark bill

Juvenile: same as female but has dark eyes

Nest: cavity; female lines an old woodpecker cavity; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 8–10; light green without markings

Incubation: 28–32 days; female incubates

Fledging: 56–59 days; female leads the young to food

Migration: complete, to Midwestern states; non-migrator in some areas

Food: aquatic plants, insects, fish, mollusks

Compare: Male Bufflehead (p. 69) is smaller and has a large white patch on the back of its head. American Coot (p. 37) is smaller and lacks the bright-golden eyes and white spot in front of each eye.

Stan's Notes: Known for the loud whistling sound produced by its wings during flight. During late winter and early spring, the male performs elaborate mating displays that include throwing his head back and calling a raspy note. The female will lay some of her eggs in other goldeneye nests or in the nests of other species (called egg dumping), causing some mothers to incubate as many as 30 eggs in a brood. Named for its bright-golden eyes. Winters in many Midwestern states wherever it finds open water.

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male

female

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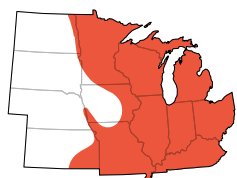
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YEAR-ROUND

Pileated Woodpecker

Dryocopus pileatus

Size: 19" (48 cm)

Male: Crow-size woodpecker with a black back and bright-red forehead, crest and mustache. Long gray bill. White leading edge of wings flashes brightly during flight.

Female: same as male but with a black forehead; lacks a red mustache

Juvenile: similar to adults but duller and browner

Nest: cavity; male and female excavate; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–5; white without markings

Incubation: 15–18 days; female incubates during the day, male incubates at night

Fledging: 26–28 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator, moves around to find food in winter

Food: insects; will come to suet and peanut feeders

Compare: The Red-headed Woodpecker (p. 63) is about half the size and has an all-red head. Look for the bright-red crest and exceptionally large size to identify the Pileated Woodpecker.

Stan's Notes: Our largest woodpecker. The common name comes from the Latin *pileatus*, which means "wearing a cap." A relatively shy bird that prefers large tracts of woodland. Drums on hollow branches, stovepipes and so forth to announce its territory. Excavates oval holes up to several feet long in tree trunks, looking for insects to eat. Large wood chips lie on the ground by excavated trees. Favorite food is carpenter ants. Feeds regurgitated insects to its young. Young emerge from the nest looking just like the adults.

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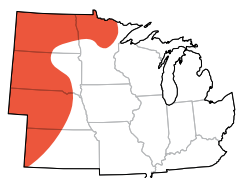
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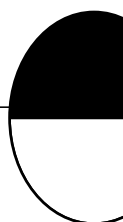
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YEAR-ROUND

Black-billed Magpie

Pica hudsonia



Size: 20" (50 cm)

Male: Large black-and-white bird with a very long tail and white belly. Iridescent green wings and tail in direct sunlight. Large black bill and legs. White wing patches flash in flight.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: same as adult, but has a shorter tail

Nest: modified pendulous; male and female build; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 5–8; green with brown markings

Incubation: 16–21 days; female incubates

Fledging: 25–29 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator

Food: insects, carrion, fruit, seeds

Compare: The contrasting black-and-white colors and the very long tail of the Black-billed Magpie distinguish it from the all-black American Crow (p. 41).

Stan's Notes: A wonderfully intelligent bird that is able to mimic dogs, cats and even people. Will often raid a barnyard dog dish for food. Feeds on a variety of food from roadkill to insects and seeds it collects from the ground. Easily identified by its bold black-and-white colors and long streaming tail. Travels in small flocks, usually family members, and tends to be very gregarious. Breeds in small colonies. Unusual dome nest (dome-shaped roof) deep within thick shrubs. Mates with same mate for several years. Prefers open fields with cattle or sheep, where it feeds on insects attracted to livestock.

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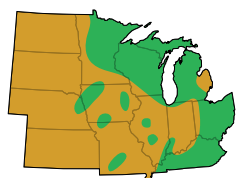
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MIGRATION
SUMMER

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Size: 21–24" (53–61 cm); up to 5½' wingspan

Male: Large eagle-like bird with a white chest, belly and head. Dark eye line. Nearly black back. Black “wrist” marks on the wings. Dark bill.

Female: same as male but slightly larger and with a necklace of brown streaks

Juvenile: similar to adults, with a light-tan breast

Nest: platform on a raised wooden platform, man-made tower or tall dead tree; female and male build; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 2–4; white with brown markings

Incubation: 32–42 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 48–58 days; male and female feed the young

Migration: complete, to southern states and Mexico

Food: fish

Compare: The juvenile Bald Eagle (p. 89) is brown with white speckles. The adult Bald Eagle has an all-white head and tail. Look for the white belly and dark eye line to identify the Osprey.

Stan's Notes: The only species in its family, and the only raptor that plunges into water feetfirst to catch fish. Always near water. Can hover for a few seconds before diving. Carries fish in a head-first position for better aerodynamics. Wings angle back in flight. Often harassed by Bald Eagles for its catch. Gives a high-pitched, whistle-like call, often calling in flight as a warning. Mates have a long-term pair bond. May not migrate to the same wintering grounds. Was nearly extinct by mid-1900s but is now doing well.

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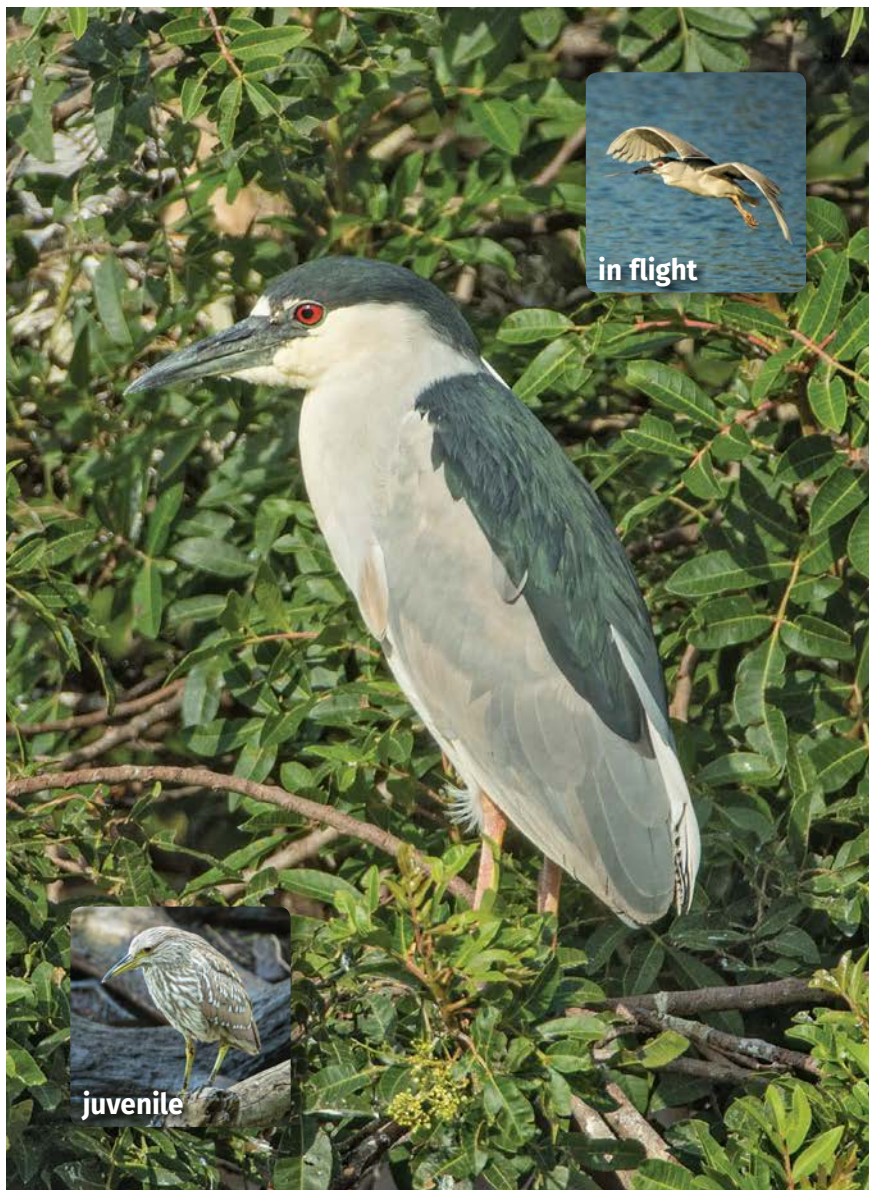
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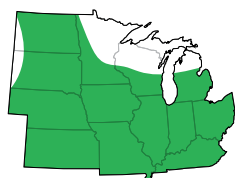
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SUMMER

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

Size: 22–27" (56–69 cm); up to 3½' wingspan

Male: A stocky, hunched and inactive heron with black back and crown, white belly and gray wings. Long dark bill and bright-red eyes. Short dull-yellow legs. Breeding adult has 2 long white plumes on crown.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: golden-brown head and back with white spots, streaked breast, yellow-orange eyes, brown bill

Nest: platform; female and male build; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–5; light blue without markings

Incubation: 24–26 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 42–48 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to southern states, Mexico and Central America

Food: fish, aquatic insects

Compare: A perching Great Blue Heron (p. 295) looks twice the size of a Black-crowned. Look for a short-necked heron with a black back and crown.

Stan's Notes: A very secretive bird, this heron is most active near dawn and dusk (crepuscular). It hunts alone, but it nests in small colonies. Roosts in trees during the day. Often squawks if disturbed from the daytime roost. Often seen being harassed by other herons during days. Stalks quiet backwaters in search of small fish and crabs.

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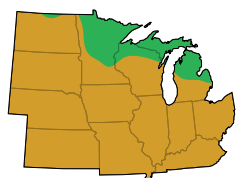
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MIGRATION
SUMMER

Common Loon

Gavia immer

Size: 28–36" (71–91 cm)

Male: Checkerboard back, black head, white necklace. Deep-red eyes. Long, pointed black bill. Winter plumage has a gray body and bill.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to winter plumage, but lacks red eyes

Nest: ground, usually at the shoreline; female and male build; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 2; olive-brown, occasionally brown markings

Incubation: 26–31 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 75–80 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to southern states, the Gulf Coast and Mexico

Food: fish, aquatic insects, crayfish, salamanders

Compare: The Double-crested Cormorant (p. 49) has a black chest and gray bill with a hooked tip and yellow at the base. Look for a checkerboard back to identify the Common Loon.

Stan's Notes: Hunts for fish by eyesight and prefers clear, clean lakes. A great swimmer, but its legs are set so far back that it has a hard time walking. "Loon" comes from the Scandinavian term *lom*, meaning "lame," for the awkward way it walks on land. To take off, it faces into the wind and runs on the water while flapping. Its wailing call suggests wild laughter, which led to the phrase "crazy as a loon." Also gives soft hoots. In the water, young ride on the backs of their parents for about 10 days. Adults perform distraction displays to protect the young. Very sensitive to disturbance during nesting and will abandon the nest.

FIELD REPORT

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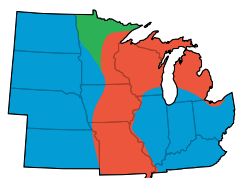
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YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER
WINTER

Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

Size: 31–37" (79–94 cm); up to 7½' wingspan

Male: White head and tail contrast sharply with the dark-brown-to-black body and wings. Large, curved yellow bill and yellow feet.

Female: same as male but larger

Juvenile: dark brown with white speckles and spots on the body and wings; gray bill

Nest: massive platform, usually in a tree; female and male build; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 2–3; off-white without markings

Incubation: 34–36 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 75–90 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: partial to non-migrator, to southern states; moves around to find open water and food

Food: fish, carrion, birds (mainly ducks)

Compare: The Golden Eagle (p. 237) and Turkey Vulture (p. 47) lack the white head and white tail of adult Bald Eagle. The juvenile Golden Eagle, with its white wrist marks and white base of tail, is similar to the juvenile Bald Eagle.

Stan's Notes: Nearly became extinct due to DDT poisoning and illegal killing. Returns to the same nest each year, adding more sticks and enlarging it to huge proportions, at times up to 1,000 pounds (450 kg). In their midair mating ritual, one eagle flips upside down and locks talons with another. Both tumble, then break apart to continue flight. Not uncommon for juveniles to perform this mating ritual even though they have not reached breeding age. Long-term pair bond but will switch mates when not successful at reproducing. Juveniles attain the white head and tail at 4–5 years of age.

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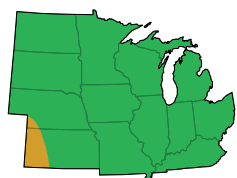
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MIGRATION
SUMMER

Tree Swallow

Tachycineta bicolor

Size: 5–6" (13–15 cm)

Male: Blue-green in spring, greener in fall. Changes color in direct sunlight. White from chin to belly. Long, pointed wing tips. Notched tail.

Female: similar to male but duller

Juvenile: gray brown with a white belly and a grayish breast band

Nest: cavity; female and male line a vacant woodpecker cavity or nest box; 2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–6; white without markings

Incubation: 13–16 days; female incubates

Fledging: 20–24 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to southern states, Mexico and Central America

Food: insects

Compare: Purple Martin (p. 101) male is similar in color, but it is larger and lacks a white chest and belly. The Barn Swallow (p. 97) has a rusty belly and a long, deeply forked tail.

Stan's Notes: Most common along ponds, lakes and agricultural fields. Can be attracted to your yard with a nest box. Competes with Eastern Bluebirds for cavities and nest boxes. Builds a grass nest within and will travel long distances, looking for dropped feathers for the lining. Flies with rapid wingbeats, then glides. Watch for it playing and chasing after feathers. Gives a series of gurgles and chirps. Chatters when upset or threatened. Eats many nuisance bugs. Gathers in large flocks to migrate.

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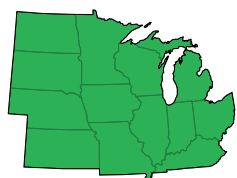
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SUMMER

Indigo Bunting

Passerina cyanea

Size: 5½" (14 cm)

Male: Vibrant-blue finch-like bird. Dark markings scattered on wings and tail.

Female: light-brown with faint markings

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 2 broods per year

Eggs: 3–4; pale blue without markings

Incubation: 12–13 days; female incubates

Fledging: 10–11 days; female feeds the young

Migration: complete, to Mexico, Central America and South America

Food: insects, seeds, fruit; will visit seed feeders

Compare: The male Blue Grosbeak (p. 95) is larger and has a large bill and chestnut-colored wing bars. The male Eastern Bluebird (p. 99) is larger and has a rusty-red breast.

Stan's Notes: Seen along woodland edges and in parks and yards, feeding on insects. Comes to seed feeders early in spring, before insects are plentiful. Usually only the males are noticed. The male often sings from treetops to attract a mate. The female is quiet. Actually a gray bird, without blue pigment in its feathers: like Blue Jays and other blue birds, sunlight is refracted within the structure of the feathers, making them appear blue. Plumage is iridescent in direct sun, duller in shade. Molts in spring to acquire body feathers with gray tips, which quickly wear off, revealing the bright-blue plumage. Molts in fall and appears like the female during winter. Migrates at night in flocks of 5–10 birds. Males return before the females and juveniles, often to the nest site of the preceding year. Juveniles move to within a mile of their birth site.

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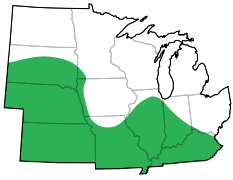
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SUMMER

Blue Grosbeak

Passerina caerulea

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Overall blue bird with 2 chestnut wing bars. Large gray-to-silver bill. Black around base of bill.

Female: overall brown with darker wings and tail, 2 tan wing bars, large gray-to-silver bill

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 3–6; pale blue without markings

Incubation: 11–12 days; female incubates

Fledging: 9–10 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to Mexico and Central America

Food: insects, seeds; will come to seed feeders

Compare: The more common male Indigo Bunting (p. 93) is very similar, but it is smaller and lacks wing bars. Look for two chestnut wing bars and a large heavy bill to distinguish it from the male Bunting.

Stan's Notes: A bird of semi-open habitats, such as overgrown fields, riversides, woodland edges and fencerows. Visits seed feeders, where it is often confused with male Indigo Buntings. Frequently seen twitching and spreading its tail. The first-year males show only some blue, obtaining the full complement of blue feathers in the second winter. It has expanded northward, and its overall populations have increased over the past 30–40 years.

FIELD REPORT

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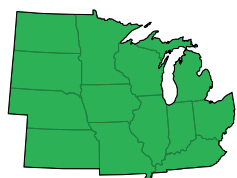
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SUMMER

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Sleek swallow. Blue-black back, cinnamon belly and reddish-brown chin. White spots on a long, deeply forked tail.

Female: same as male but with a whitish belly

Juvenile: similar to adults, with a tan belly and chin, and shorter tail

Nest: cup; female and male build; 2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–5; white with brown markings

Incubation: 13–17 days; female incubates

Fledging: 18–23 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to Mexico and South America

Food: insects (prefers beetles, wasps, flies)

Compare: Tree Swallow (p. 91) has a white belly and chin and a notched tail. The Chimney Swift (p. 107) has a narrow pointed tail with wings longer than the body. Purple Martin (p. 101) is nearly 2 inches (5 cm) larger and has a dark-purple belly. Look for Barn Swallow's deeply forked tail.

Stan's Notes: Seen in wetlands, farms, suburban yards and parks. Of the six swallow species regularly found in the Midwest, this is the only one with a deeply forked tail. Unlike other swallows, it rarely glides in flight. Usually flies low over land or water. Drinks as it flies, skimming water, or will sip water droplets on wet leaves. Bathes while flying through rain or sprinklers. Gives a twittering warble, followed by a mechanical sound. Builds a mud nest with up to 1,000 beak-loads of mud. Nests on barns and houses, under bridges and in other sheltered places. Often nests in colonies of 4–6 birds; sometimes nests alone.

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male



female

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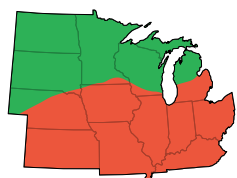
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YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER

Eastern Bluebird

Sialia sialis

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Sky-blue head, back and tail. Rust-red breast and white belly.

Female: grayer than male, with a faint rusty breast and faint blue wings and tail

Juvenile: similar to female but with spots on the breast and blue wing markings

Nest: cavity, vacant woodpecker cavity or nest box; female adds a soft lining; 2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–5; pale blue without markings

Incubation: 12–14 days; female incubates

Fledging: 15–18 days; male and female feed the young

Migration: non-migrator to complete, to southern states

Food: insects, fruit; comes to shallow dishes with live or dead mealworms, and to suet feeders

Compare: Male Indigo Bunting (p. 93) is nearly all blue, lacking the rusty-red chest. Blue Jay (p. 103) is much larger and has a crest. Look for the rusty breast to help identify the Eastern Bluebird.

Stan's Notes: A summer resident of open fields and agricultural areas, gathering in large family groups for migration. Once nearly eliminated from the Midwest due to a lack of nest cavities. Thanks to people who installed thousands of nest boxes, bluebirds now thrive. Prefers open habitats, such as farm fields, pastures and roadsides, but also likes forest edges, parks and yards. Easily tamed. Often perches on trees or fence posts and drops to the ground to grab bugs, especially grasshoppers. Makes short flights from tree to tree. Song is a distinctive “churlee chur chur-lee.” The rust-red breast is like that of the American Robin, its cousin.

FIELD REPORT

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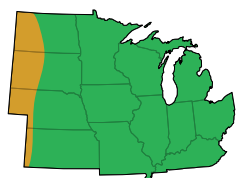
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MIGRATION
SUMMER

Purple Martin

Progne subis

Size: 8½" (21.5 cm)

Male: Iridescent with a purple-to-black head, back and belly. Black wings and a notched black tail.

Female: grayish-purple head and back, darker wings and tail, whitish belly

Juvenile: same as female

Nest: cavity; female and male line the cavity of the house; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–5; white without markings

Incubation: 15–18 days; female incubates

Fledging: 26–30 days; male and female feed the young

Migration: complete, to South America

Food: insects

Compare: Usually seen only in groups. The male Purple Martin is the only swallow with a very dark-purplish belly.

Stan's Notes: The largest swallow species in North America. Once nested in tree cavities; now nests almost exclusively in man-made, apartment-style houses. The most successful colonies often nest in multiunit nest boxes within 100 feet (30 m) of a human dwelling near a lake. Main diet consists of dragonflies, not mosquitoes, as once thought. Gives a continuous stream of chirps, creaks and rattles, along with a shout-like “churr” and chortle. Often drinks in flight, skimming water, and bathes in flight, flying through rain. Returns to the same nest site each year; the males arrive before the females and yearlings. The young leave to form new colonies. Large colonies gather in fall before migrating to South America.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

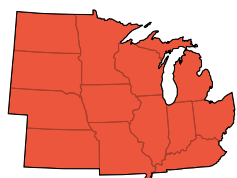
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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST



YEAR-ROUND

Blue Jay

Cyanocitta cristata

Size: 12" (30 cm)

Male: Bright light-blue-and-white bird with a black necklace and gray belly. Large crest moves up and down at will. White face, wing bars and tip of tail. Black tail bands.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: same as adult but duller

Nest: cup; female and male construct; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–5; green to blue with brown markings

Incubation: 16–18 days; female incubates

Fledging: 17–21 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator; will move around to find an abundant food source

Food: insects, fruit, carrion, seeds, nuts; visits seed feeders, ground feeders with corn or peanuts

Compare: The Belted Kingfisher (p. 105) has a larger, more ragged crest. The Eastern Bluebird (p. 99) is much smaller and has a rust-red breast. Look for the large crest to help identify the Blue Jay.

Stan's Notes: Highly intelligent, solving problems, gathering food and communicating more than other birds. Loud and noisy; mimics other birds. Known as the alarm of the forest, screaming at intruders. Imitates hawk calls around feeders to scare off other birds. One of the few birds to cache food; can remember where it hid thousands of nuts. Carries food in a pouch under its tongue (sublingually). Eats eggs and young from other nests. Feathers lack blue pigment; refracted sunlight causes the blue appearance.

FIELD REPORT

Date/Time _____ Season _____

Location _____

GPS _____

Weather _____

Notes _____

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ JUVENILE ☐ NEST

BIRDING RESOURCES

The internet is a valuable place to learn more about birds. You may find birding on the net a fun way to discover additional information or to spend a long winter night. These websites will assist you in your pursuit of birds. If a web address doesn't work (they often change a bit), just enter the name of the group into a search engine to track down the new address.

Author Stan Tekiela's home page
www.naturesmart.com

American Birding Association
www.aba.org

Cornell Lab of Ornithology
www.birds.cornell.edu

ILLINOIS

Illinois Audubon Society
illinoisaudubon.org

Illinois Ornithological Society
www.illinoisbirds.org

INDIANA

Indiana Audubon Society
indianaaudubon.org

IOWA

Iowa Audubon
iowaaudubon.org

Iowa Ornithologists' Union
iowabirds.org

KANSAS

Audubon of Kansas
www.audubonofkansas.org

Kansas Ornithological Society
www.ksbirds.org

KENTUCKY

Audubon Society of Kentucky
audubonsocietyofky.org

Kentucky Ornithological Society
birdky.org

MICHIGAN

Michigan Audubon Society
www.michiganaudubon.org

MINNESOTA

Audubon Minnesota
mn.audubon.org

Minnesota Ornithologists' Union
moumn.org

MISSOURI

Audubon Missouri
mo.audubon.org

The Missouri Birding Society
mobirds.org

NEBRASKA

Audubon Nebraska
ne.audubon.org

Nebraska Ornithologists' Union
noubirds.org

NORTH DAKOTA

Audubon Dakota
dakota.audubon.org

North Dakota Birding Society
www.ndbirdingsociety.com

OHIO

Audubon Society of Ohio
(Cincinnati chapter)
cincinnati.audubon.org

Ohio Ornithological Society
ohiobirds.org

SOUTH DAKOTA

Audubon Dakota
dakota.audubon.org

South Dakota Ornithologists' Union
sdou.org

WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Audubon Council
www.wisconsin.audubon.org

Wisconsin Society for Ornithology
wsobirds.org

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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 titles for Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Stan has authored more than 190 educational books, including field guides, quick guides, nature books, children's books, playing cards and more, presenting many species of animals and plants.

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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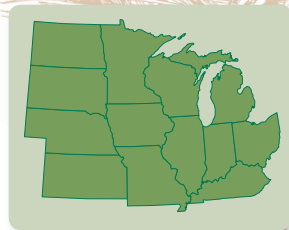
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2 HOW-TO GUIDE

Read Stan's tips for identifying birds and attracting them to your feeder. Learn about everything from birding hot spots to reporting a rare bird to dealing with injured birds.

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Log when and where you saw each species, and keep track of your birding life list. This beautiful book doubles as a lifelong keepsake.

