

2ND EDITION

# Birds *of* Connecticut & Rhode Island

Field Guide



Stan Tekiela

**Birds that are mostly black**

p. 23



**Birds that are mostly black and white**

p. 45



**Birds that are mostly blue**

p. 83



**Birds that are mostly brown**

p. 97



**Birds that are mostly gray**

p. 211



**Birds that have prominent green**

p. 267



**Birds that have prominent orange**

p. 279



**Birds that have prominent red**

p. 285



**Birds that are mostly white**

p. 295



**Birds that have prominent yellow**

p. 311



## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

To help you quickly and easily identify birds, this field guide is organized by color. Refer to the color key on the first page, note the color of the bird, and turn to that section. For example, the male Rose-breasted Grosbeak is black-and-white with a red patch on his chest. 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 the 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 the 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 very different in color. In others, the breeding and winter plumage colors differ. These species will have an inset photograph with a page reference and will be found in two color sections.

You will find a variety of information in the bird description sections. To learn more, turn to the sample on pp. 20–21.

### Range Maps

Range maps are included for each bird. Colored areas indicate where the bird is frequently found. The colors represent the 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 migration.

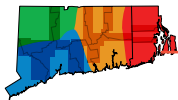
While every effort has been made to depict accurate ranges, these are constantly in flux due to a variety of factors. Changing weather, habitat, species abundance and availability of vital resources, such as food and water, can affect the migration and movement of local populations, causing birds to be found in areas that are atypical for the species. So please use the maps as intended—as general guides only.

male

female  
p. 115



# Common Name



YEAR-ROUND  
SUMMER  
MIGRATION  
WINTER

## Range Map

Scientific name

## Color Indicator

**Size:** measurement is from head to tip of tail; wingspan may be listed as well

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

**Female:** brief description of the female bird, which is sometimes different from the male

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

**Nest:** kind of nest the bird builds to raise its young; who builds it; number of broods per year

**Eggs:** number of eggs you might expect to see in a nest; color and marking

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

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

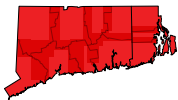
**Migration:** type of migrator: complete (seasonal, consistent), partial (seasonal, destination varies), irruptive (unpredictable, depends on the food supply) or non-migrator

**Food:** what the bird eats most of the time (e.g., seeds, insects, fruit, nectar, small mammals, fish) and whether it typically comes to a bird feeder

**Compare:** notes about other birds that look similar and the pages on which they can be found; may include extra information to aid in identification

**Stan's Notes:** Interesting natural history information. This could be something to look or listen for or something to help positively identify the bird. Also includes remarkable features.





YEAR-ROUND

## Fish Crow

*Corvus ossifragus*

**Size:** 16" (40 cm)

**Male:** All-black bird appearing nearly identical to the American Crow, but with a longer tail and a smaller head and bill.

**Female:** same as male

**Juvenile:** same as adult

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

**Eggs:** 4–5; blue or gray-green with brown marks

**Incubation:** 16–18 days; female and male incubate

**Fledging:** 21–24 days; female and male feed the young

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

**Food:** insects, carrion, mollusks, berries, seeds

**Compare:** American Crow (p. 37) is nearly identical, but it is larger and has a shorter tail and a larger head and bill. Fish Crow is most easily differentiated from American Crow by its higher-pitched call.

**Stan's Notes:** Essentially a bird of the coast and along major rivers, but can be found inland in parts of Connecticut and Rhode Island. Not uncommon for it to break open mollusk shells by dropping them onto rocks from above. Very sociable and gregarious. Nests in small colonies, often building a stick nest in a palm tree. Forms small winter flocks of up to 100 birds, unlike the American Crow, which often forms winter flocks of several thousand. The best way to distinguish between the two crow species is by their remarkably different calls. Fish Crow has a high, nasal “cah.”





male

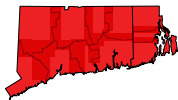


female



# Hairy Woodpecker

*Leuconotopicus villosus*



YEAR-ROUND

**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; will come to suet and seed feeders

**Compare:** Much larger than the Downy Woodpecker (p. 47) and has a much longer bill, nearly equal to the width of its head.

**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. Often prefers to excavate nest cavities in live aspen trees. Excavates a larger, more oval-shaped entrance than the round entrance hole of the Downy Woodpecker. Makes short flights from tree to tree.



soaring

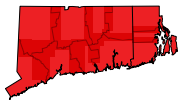


juvenile



soaring  
juvenile





YEAR-ROUND

## 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 southeastern states

**Food:** fish, carrion, birds (mainly ducks)

**Compare:** The Turkey Vulture (p. 41) is smaller, has two-toned wings and holds them in a V shape in flight. The Eagle holds its wings straight out.

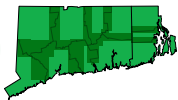
**Stan's Notes:** Nearly became extinct due to DDT poisoning and illegal killing. Now making a comeback in North America. Returns to the same nest each year, adding more sticks and enlarging it to huge proportions, at times up to 1,000 pounds (450 kg). In their midair mating ritual, one eagle flips upside 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.

male



female  
p. 115





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

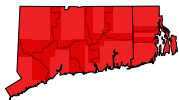
**Migration:** complete, to Mexico, Central America and South America

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

**Compare:** The male Eastern Bluebird (p. 89) is larger and has a rust-red chest. Look for the bright-blue plumage to identify the male Indigo Bunting.

**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.





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; will move around in winter 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. 95) has a larger, more ragged crest. The Eastern Bluebird (p. 89) 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 birds from other nests. Feathers lack blue pigment; refracted sunlight causes the blue appearance.



**soaring**

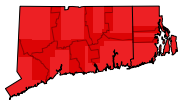


**juvenile  
soaring**



**juvenile**





YEAR-ROUND

## Red-tailed Hawk

*Buteo jamaicensis*

**Size:** 19–23" (48–58 cm); up to 4½' wingspan

**Male:** Variety of colorations, from chocolate brown to nearly all white. Often brown with a white breast and brown belly band. Rust-red tail. Underside of wing is white with a small dark patch on the leading edge near the shoulder.

**Female:** same as male but slightly larger

**Juvenile:** similar to adults, with a speckled breast and light eyes; lacks a red tail

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

**Eggs:** 2–3; white without markings, sometimes marked with brown

**Incubation:** 30–35 days; female and male incubate

**Fledging:** 45–46 days; male and female feed the young

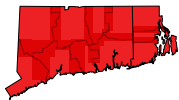
**Migration:** partial migrator, to southern states; small percentage do not migrate

**Food:** small and medium-size animals, large birds, snakes, fish, insects, bats, carrion

**Compare:** Broad-winged Hawk (p. 179), Cooper's Hawk (p. 255) and Sharp-shinned Hawk (p. 253) are smaller and lack the red tail.

**Stan's Notes:** Common in open country and cities. Seen perching on fences, freeway lampposts, and trees. Look for it circling above open fields and roadsides, searching for prey. Gives a high-pitched scream that trails off. Often builds a large stick nest in large trees along roads. Lines nest with finer material, like evergreen needles. Returns to the same nest site each year. The red tail develops in the second year and is best seen from above.





YEAR-ROUND

## Rock Pigeon

*Columba livia*

**Size:** 13" (33 cm)

**Male:** No set color pattern. Shades of gray to white with patches of gleaming, iridescent green and blue. Often has a light rump patch.

**Female:** same as male

**Juvenile:** same as adults

**Nest:** platform; female builds; 3–4 broods per year

**Eggs:** 1–2; white without markings

**Incubation:** 18–20 days; female and male incubate

**Fledging:** 25–26 days; female and male feed the young

**Migration:** non-migrator

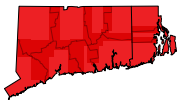
**Food:** seeds, fruit; visits ground and seed feeders

**Compare:** The Eurasian Collared-Dove (p. 249) has a black collar on the nape. The Mourning Dove (p. 167) is smaller and light brown and lacks the variety of color combinations of the Rock Pigeon.

**Stan's Notes:** Also known as the Domestic Pigeon. Formerly known as the Rock Dove. Introduced to North America from Europe by the early settlers. Most common around cities and barnyards, where it scratches for seeds. One of the few birds with a wide variety of colors, produced by years of selective breeding while in captivity. Parents feed the young a regurgitated liquid known as crop-milk for the first few days of life. One of the few birds that can drink without tilting its head back. Nests under bridges or on buildings, balconies, barns, and sheds. Was once thought to be a nuisance in cities and was poisoned. Now, many cities have Peregrine Falcons feeding on Rock Pigeons, which keeps their numbers in check.

in flight





YEAR-ROUND

## Canada Goose

*Branta canadensis*

**Size:** 25–43" (64–109 cm); up to 5½' wingspan

**Male:** Large gray goose with a black neck and head. White chin and cheek strap.

**Female:** same as male

**Juvenile:** same as adults

**Nest:** platform on the ground; female constructs; 1 brood per year

**Eggs:** 5–10; white without markings

**Incubation:** 25–30 days; female incubates

**Fledging:** 42–55 days; male and female teach the young to feed

**Migration:** non-migrator to partial migrator, to southern states; moves around to find open water in winter

**Food:** aquatic plants, insects, seeds

**Compare:** Large goose that is rarely confused with any other bird.

**Stan's Notes:** This bird is a year-round resident in both states. Calls a classic "honk-honk-honk," especially in flight. Flocks fly in a large V when traveling long distances. Begins breeding in the third year. Adults mate for many years. If threatened, they will hiss as a warning. Males stand as sentinels at the edge of their group and will bob their heads and become aggressive if approached. Adults molt their primary flight feathers while raising their young, rendering family groups temporarily flightless. Several subspecies vary in the U.S. Generally eastern groups are paler than western. Their size also varies, decreasing northward. The smallest subspecies is in the Arctic.



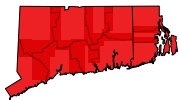
female  
p. 197



male







YEAR-ROUND

# Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*

**Size:** 19–21" (48–53 cm)

**Male:** Large, bulbous green head, white necklace, and rust-brown or chestnut chest. Gray-and-white sides. Yellow bill. Orange legs and feet.

**Female:** brown with an orange-and-black bill and blue-and-white wing mark (speculum)

**Juvenile:** same as female but with a yellow bill

**Nest:** ground; female builds; 1 brood per year

**Eggs:** 7–10; greenish to whitish, unmarked

**Incubation:** 26–30 days; female incubates

**Fledging:** 42–52 days; female leads the young to food

**Migration:** non-migrator to partial, to southern states; small percentage are non-migrators

**Food:** seeds, plants, aquatic insects; will come to ground feeders offering corn

**Compare:** Most people recognize this common duck. The male Northern Shoveler (p. 275) has a white chest with rusty sides and a very large, spoon-shaped bill. Look for the green head and yellow bill to identify the male Mallard.

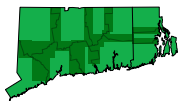
**Stan's Notes:** A familiar dabbling duck of lakes and ponds. Also found in rivers, streams, and some backyards. Tips forward to feed on vegetation on the bottom of shallow water. The name "Mallard" comes from the Latin word *masculus*, meaning "male," referring to the male's habit of taking no part in raising the young. Male and female have white underwings and white tails, but only the male has black central tail feathers that curl upward. Unlike the female, the male doesn't quack. Returns to its birthplace each year.

female  
p. 325



male





SUMMER

# Baltimore Oriole

*Icterus galbula*

**Size:** 7–8" (18–20 cm)

**Male:** Flaming orange with a black head and back. White-and-orange wing bars. Orange-and-black tail. Gray bill and dark eyes.

**Female:** pale yellow with orange tones, gray-brown wings, white wing bars, gray bill, dark eyes

**Juvenile:** same as female

**Nest:** pendulous; female builds; 1 brood per year

**Eggs:** 4–5; bluish with brown markings

**Incubation:** 12–14 days; female incubates

**Fledging:** 12–14 days; female and male feed the young

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

**Food:** insects, fruit, nectar; comes to nectar, orange-half, and grape-jelly feeders

**Compare:** The male American Redstart (p. 279) has much less orange. The male Orchard Oriole (p. 283) is much darker orange. Look for the flaming orange to identify the male Baltimore Oriole.

**Stan's Notes:** A fantastic songster, often heard before seen. Easily attracted to a feeder that offers sugar water (nectar), orange halves, or grape jelly. Parents bring their young to feeders. Sits at the top of trees, feeding on caterpillars. Female builds a sock-like nest at the outermost branches of tall trees. Prefers parks, yards, and forests and often returns to the same area year after year. Seen during migration and summer. Some of the last birds to arrive in spring (May) and some of the first to leave in the fall (September). Young males turn orange-and-black at 1½ years of age.



male



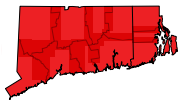
female  
p. 149



juvenile

# Northern Cardinal

*Cardinalis cardinalis*



YEAR-ROUND

**Size:** 8–9" (20–23 cm)

**Male:** Red with a black mask that extends from the face to the throat. Large crest and a large red bill.

**Female:** buff-brown with a black mask, large reddish bill, and red tinges on the crest and wings

**Juvenile:** same as female but with a blackish-gray bill

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

**Eggs:** 3–4; bluish white with brown markings

**Incubation:** 12–13 days; female and male incubate

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

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

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

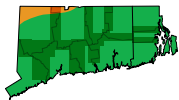
**Compare:** The male Scarlet Tanager (p. 289) is smaller and has black wings. Look for the black mask, large crest, and red bill to identify the male Northern Cardinal.

**Stan's Notes:** A familiar backyard bird. Seen in a variety of habitats, including parks. Usually likes thick vegetation. One of the few species in which both males and females sing. Can be heard all year. Listen for its “whata-cheer-cheer-cheer” territorial call in spring. Watch for a male feeding a female during courtship. The male also feeds the young of the first brood while the female builds a second nest. Territorial in spring, fighting its own reflection in a window or other reflective surface. Non-territorial in winter, gathering in small flocks of up to 20 birds. *Cardinalis* denotes importance, as represented by the red priestly garments of Catholic cardinals.



in flight





SUMMER  
MIGRATION

## Snowy Egret

*Egretta thula*

**Size:** 22–26" (56–66 cm); up to 3½' wingspan

**Male:** All-white bird with black bill. Black legs. Bright-yellow feet. Long feather plumes on head, neck, and back during breeding season.

**Female:** same as male

**Juvenile:** similar to adult, but backs of legs are yellow

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

**Eggs:** 3–5; light blue-green without markings

**Incubation:** 20–24 days; female and male incubate

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

**Migration:** complete, to Gulf Coast and Mexico

**Food:** aquatic insects, small fish

**Compare:** Great Egret (p. 307) is much larger and has a yellow bill and black feet. Look for the black bill and yellow feet of Snowy Egret to help identify.

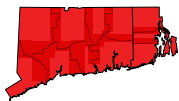
**Stan's Notes:** Common in wetlands and often seen with other egrets. Colonies may include up to several hundred nests. Nests are low in shrubs 5–10 feet (1.5–3 m) tall or constructs a nest on the ground, usually mixed among other egret and heron nests. Chicks hatch days apart (asynchronous), leading to starvation of last to hatch. Will actively "hunt" prey by moving around quickly, stirring up small fish and aquatic insects with its feet. In the breeding state, a yellow patch at the base of bill and the yellow feet turn orange-red. Was hunted to near extinction in the late 1800s for its feathers.



**male**

**winter  
male**

**female**



YEAR-ROUND

## American Goldfinch

*Spinus tristis*

**Size:** 5" (13 cm)

**Male:** Canary-yellow finch with a black forehead and tail. Black wings with white wing bars. White rump. No markings on the chest. Winter male is similar to the female.

**Female:** dull olive-yellow plumage with brown wings; lacks a black forehead

**Juvenile:** same as female

**Nest:** cup; female builds; 1 brood per year

**Eggs:** 4–6; pale blue without markings

**Incubation:** 10–12 days; female incubates

**Fledging:** 11–17 days; female and male feed the young

**Migration:** partial to non-migrator; small flocks of up to 20 birds move around North America; many stay for the winter

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

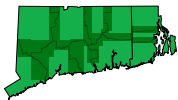
**Compare:** The male Yellow Warbler (p. 319) is yellow with orange streaks on its chest. The Pine Siskin (p. 107) has a streaked chest and belly and yellow wing bars. The female House Finch (p. 109) and female Purple Finch (p. 125) have heavily streaked chests.

**Stan's Notes:** Common backyard resident. Most often found in open fields, scrubby areas, and woodlands. Enjoys Nyjer seed in feeders. Breeds in late summer. Lines its nest with the silky down from wild thistle. Almost always in small flocks. Twitters while it flies. Flight is roller coaster-like. Moves around to find adequate food during winter. Often called Wild Canary due to the male's canary-colored plumage. Male sings a pleasant, high-pitched song.



female





SUMMER

## Orchard Oriole

*Icterus spurius*

**Size:** 7–8" (18–20 cm)

**Female:** Olive-green with a dull-yellow belly. Gray wings with 2 indistinct white wing bars. Long, thin bill with a gray mark on the lower bill.

**Male:** dark orange with black head, throat, upper back, wings, and tail; 1 white wing bar

**Juvenile:** Same as female. First-year male looks like the female, with a black bib.

**Nest:** pendulous; female builds; 1 brood per year

**Eggs:** 3–5; pale blue to white, brown markings

**Incubation:** 11–12 days; female and male incubate

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

**Migration:** complete, to central Mexico and northern South America

**Food:** insects, fruit, nectar; comes to nectar, orange-half, and grape-jelly feeders

**Compare:** The female Baltimore Oriole (p. 325) has orange tones and more-distinct wing bars. The female Scarlet Tanager (p. 323) has a larger bill.

**Stan's Notes:** Named "Orchard" for its preference for orchards. Also likes open woods. Eats insects until wild fruit starts to ripen. Often nests alone; sometimes nests in small colonies. Parents bring their young to bird feeding stations after they fledge. Many people don't see these birds at feeders much during the summer and think they have left, but the birds are still there, hunting for insects to feed to their young. Spends 3–4 months in Connecticut and Rhode Island. Some of the first birds to migrate at the end of summer. Often migrates in flocks with Baltimore Orioles.

# Connecticut and Rhode Island's Best-Selling Bird Guide

## Make bird watching more informative and enjoyable

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- **Stan's Notes:** Naturalist tidbits and facts
- **Professional photos:** Crisp, stunning full-page images

This 2nd Edition includes 8 new species, updated photographs and range maps, expanded information in Stan's Notes, and much more!



### About the Author

Naturalist Stan Tekiela is an award-winning wildlife photographer and the author of many popular state-specific field guides. He has written educational books about wildlife, including children's books, quick guides, and more, presenting birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, trees, wildflowers, and cacti.

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