

2ND EDITION

# Birds *of* Alabama

## Field Guide



Stan Tekiela

**Birds that are mostly black** p. 25

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**Birds that are mostly black and white** p. 53

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**Birds that are mostly blue** p. 95

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## 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 that you see. One of the first and easiest things to do when you see a new bird is to note **its color**. This field guide is organized by color, so simply turn to the right color section to find it.

Next, note the **size of the bird**. A strategy to quickly estimate size is to compare different birds. Pick a small, a medium and a large bird. Select an American Robin as the medium bird. Measured from bill tip to tail tip, a robin is 10 inches (25 cm). Now select two other birds, one smaller and one larger. Good choices are a House Sparrow, at about 6 inches (15 cm), and an American Crow, around 18 inches (45 cm). When you see a species you don't know, you can now quickly ask yourself, "Is it larger than a sparrow but smaller than a robin?" When you look in your field guide to identify your bird, you would check the species that are roughly 6–10 inches (15–25 cm). This will help to narrow your choices.

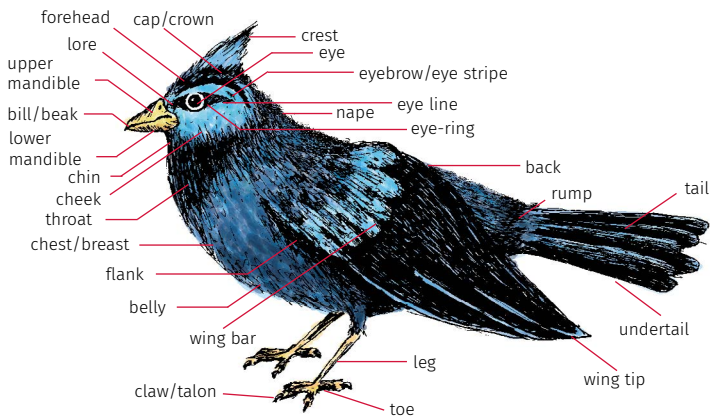
Next, note the **size, shape and color of the bill**. Is it long or short, thick or thin, pointed or blunt, curved or straight? Seed-eating birds, such as Northern Cardinals, have bills that are thick and strong enough to crack even the toughest seeds. Birds that sip nectar, such as Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, 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 whether 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?

## 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 a Northern Cardinal's head 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 common in the bird world. In general, male birds are more colorful than their female counterparts. This helps males attract a mate, essentially saying, "Hey, look at me!" Color calls attention to a male's health as well. The better the condition of his feathers, the better his food source, territory and potential for mating.

The majority of small birds, called **passerines**, migrate at night. Studies show that some use the stars to navigate. Others use the setting sun, and still others, such as pigeons, use Earth's magnetic field to guide them north or south.

While flying at night may not seem like a good idea, it's actually safer. First, there are fewer avian predators hunting for birds at night. Second, night travel allows time during the day to find food in unfamiliar surroundings. Third, wind patterns at night tend to be flat, or laminar. Flat winds don't have the turbulence of daytime winds and can help push the smaller birds along.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

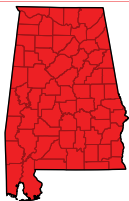
To help you quickly and easily identify birds, this field guide is organized by color. Refer to the color key on the first page, note the color of the bird, and turn to that section. For example, the male Rose-breasted Grosbeak is black-and-white with a red patch on his chest. Because the bird is mostly 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. 22–23.





## Brown-headed Cowbird

*Molothrus ater*

**Size:** 7½" (19 cm)

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

**YEAR-ROUND 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 bird incubates eggs

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

**Migration:** non-migrator in Alabama

**Food:** insects, seeds; will come to seed feeders

**Compare:** The male Red-winged Blackbird (p. 31) is slightly larger with red-and-yellow patches on upper wings. Common Grackle (p. 33) has a long tail and lacks the brown head. European Starling (p. 29) has a shorter tail.

**Stan's Notes:** Cowbirds are members of the blackbird family. Known as brood parasites, Brown-headed Cowbirds are the only parasitic birds in Alabama. 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.

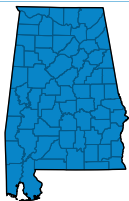


female  
p. 209



male





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, to Alabama, and other southern states

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

**Compare:** Male Bufflehead (p. 71) is smaller than the Hooded Merganser and has white sides. The male Wood Duck (p. 313) 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. The male voluntarily raises and lowers its crest to show off the large white head patch. 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.

**male**



**female**  
**p. 129**





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 Florida, Mexico, Central America and South America

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

**Compare:** The male Eastern Bluebird (p. 105) is larger and has a rust-red chest. Male Blue Grosbeak (p. 103) is larger, has chestnut-colored wing bars and a large bill. Look for the bright-blue plumage to identify the male Indigo Bunting.

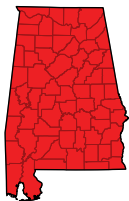
**Stan's Notes:** Seen along woodland edges and in parks and yards, feeding on insects. Comes to seed feeders early in spring, before insects are plentiful. Actually a gray bird, without blue pigment in its feathers: like Blue Jays and other blue birds, sunlight is refracted within the structure of the 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 individuals. Males return before the females and juveniles, usually returning to previous year's nest site. Juveniles move to within a mile of their birth site.



**male**



**female**



# Eastern Bluebird

*Sialia sialis*

**Size:** 7" (18 cm)

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

**YEAR-ROUND 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 dried grass; 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 in Alabama

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

**Compare:** The male Indigo Bunting (p. 97) is nearly all blue. The Blue Jay (p. 109) is much larger and has a crest. Look for the rusty breast to help identify the Eastern Bluebird.

**Stan's Notes:** Once nearly eliminated from Alabama due to a lack of nest cavities. Thanks to people who installed thousands of nest boxes, bluebirds now thrive. Easily tamed. Prefers open habitats, such as farm fields, pastures and roadsides, but also likes forest edges, parks and yards. 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.” A year-round resident that is joined by many northern migrants, swelling populations during winter. The rust-red breast is like that of the American Robin, its cousin.

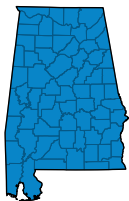


male  
p. 251



female





WINTER

## Dark-eyed Junco

*Junco hyemalis*

**Size:** 5½" (14 cm)

**Female:** Plump, dark-eyed bird with a tan-to-brown chest, head and back. White belly. Ivory-to-pink bill. White outer tail feathers appear like a white V in flight.

**Male:** round with gray plumage

**Juvenile:** similar to female, with streaking on the breast and head

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

**Eggs:** 3–5; white with reddish-brown markings

**Incubation:** 12–13 days; female incubates

**Fledging:** 10–13 days; male and female feed the young

**Migration:** complete to Alabama and southern states

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

**Compare:** Rarely confused with any other bird. Look for the ivory-to-pink bill and small flocks feeding under feeders to help identify the female Dark-eyed Junco.

**Stan's Notes:** A common winter bird in Alabama. Migrates from Canada to Alabama. Females tend to migrate farther south than males. Adheres to a rigid social hierarchy, with dominant birds chasing the less dominant ones. Look for the white outer tail feathers flashing in flight. Often seen in small flocks on the ground, where it uses its feet to simultaneously “double-scratch” to expose seeds and insects. Eats many weed seeds. Nests in a wide variety of wooded habitats. Several subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco were previously considered to be separate species. Throughout the U.S.



winter  
p. 267



breeding





MIGRATION  
WINTER

# Sanderling

*Calidris alba*

**Size:** 8" (20 cm)

**Male:** Breeding adult (April to August) has a rusty head, chest and back with white belly. Black legs and bill.

**Female:** same as male

**Juvenile:** spotty black on the head and back, a white belly, black legs and bill

**Nest:** ground; male builds; 1–2 broods per year

**Eggs:** 3–4; greenish olive with brown markings

**Incubation:** 24–30 days; male and female incubate

**Fledging:** 16–17 days; female and male feed the young

**Migration:** complete, to coastal Alabama, other southern coastal states, Mexico, and Central and South America

**Food:** insects

**Compare:** Spotted Sandpiper (p. 161) is the same size as Sanderling, but the breeding Spotted Sandpiper has black spots on its chest.

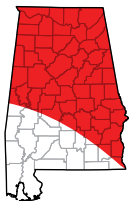
**Stan's Notes:** A migrant and winter shorebird, but mostly seen in its gray winter plumage from August to April. Can be seen in groups on sandy beaches, running out with each retreating wave to feed. Look for a flash of white on the wings when it is in flight. Sometimes a female will mate with several males (polyandry), which results in males and the female incubating separate nests. Nests on the Arctic tundra. Rests by standing on one leg (see inset) and tucking the other leg into its belly feathers. Often hops away on one leg, moving away from pedestrians on the beach. Surveys show a greater than 80 percent decline in numbers since the 1970s.

**male**



**female**





YEAR-ROUND

## White-breasted Nuthatch

*Sitta carolinensis*

**Size:** 5–6" (13–15 cm)

**Male:** Slate gray with a white face, breast and belly. Large white patch on the rump. Black cap and nape. Bill is long and thin, slightly upturned. Chestnut undertail.

**Female:** similar to male, but has a gray cap and nape

**Juvenile:** similar to female

**Nest:** cavity; female and male build a nest within; 1 brood per year

**Eggs:** 5–7; white with brown markings

**Incubation:** 11–12 days; female incubates

**Fledging:** 13–14 days; female and male feed the young

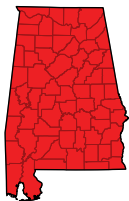
**Migration:** non-migrator

**Food:** insects, insect eggs, seeds; comes to seed and suet feeders

**Compare:** The Red-breasted Nuthatch (p. 239) is smaller and has a rust-red belly and distinctive black eye line. Look for the white breast to help identify the White-breasted Nuthatch.

**Stan's Notes:** The nuthatch hops headfirst down trees, looking for insects missed by birds climbing up. Its climbing agility is due to an extra-long hind toe claw, or nail, that is nearly twice the size of its front claws. "Nuthatch," from the Middle English *nuthak*, refers to the bird's habit of wedging a seed in a crevice and hacking it open. Often seen in flocks with chickadees and Downy Woodpeckers. Mates stay together year-round, defending a small territory. Gives a characteristic "whi-whi-whi-whi" spring call during February and March. One of 17 worldwide nuthatch species.





YEAR-ROUND

## Tufted Titmouse

*Baeolophus bicolor*

**Size:** 6" (15 cm)

**Male:** Slate gray with a white chest and belly. Pointed crest. Rust-brown wash on the flanks. Gray legs and dark eyes.

**Female:** same as male

**Juvenile:** same as adult

**Nest:** cavity; female lines an old woodpecker cavity; 2 broods per year

**Eggs:** 5–7; white with brown markings

**Incubation:** 13–14 days; female incubates

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

**Migration:** non-migrator

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

**Compare:** The Carolina Chickadee (p. 243) is a close relative but is smaller and lacks a crest. The White-breasted Nuthatch (p. 245) has a rust-brown undertail. The Brown-headed Nuthatch (p. 241) is smaller and has a brown cap.

**Stan's Notes:** A common feeder bird that can be attracted with an offering of black oil sunflower seeds or suet. Can also be attracted with a nest box. Well known for its “peter-peter-peter” call, which it quickly repeats. Notorious for pulling hair from sleeping dogs, cats and squirrels to line its nest. Male feeds female during courtship and nesting. The prefix *tit* in the common name comes from a Scandinavian word meaning “little.” Suffix *mouse* is derived from the Old English word *mase*, meaning “bird.” Simply translated, it is a “small bird.”



male



female



## Ruby-throated Hummingbird

*Archilochus colubris*



SUMMER

**Size:** 3–3½" (7.5–9 cm)

**Male:** Tiny iridescent green bird with black throat patch that reflects bright ruby red in sun.

**Female:** same as male, but lacking the throat patch

**Juvenile:** same as female

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

**Eggs:** 2; white without markings

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

**Fledging:** 14–18 days; female feeds the young

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

**Food:** nectar, insects; will come to nectar feeders

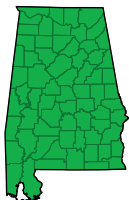
**Compare:** No other bird is as tiny. The Sphinx Moth also hovers at flowers but has clear wings, doesn't hum in flight, moves much slower than the Ruby-throated and can be approached.

**Stan's Notes:** This is the smallest bird in Alabama. Can fly straight up, straight down or backward and hover in midair. Does not sing but chatters or buzzes to communicate. Weighs about the same as a U.S. penny; it takes about five average-size hummingbirds to equal the weight of one chickadee. The wings create the humming sound. Flaps 50–60 times or more per second when flying at top speed. Breathes 250 times per minute. Heart beats up to 1,260 times per minute. Builds a stretchy nest with plant material and spiderwebs, gluing pieces of lichen to the exterior for camouflage. Attracted to colorful, tubular flowers. Will extract and eat insects trapped in spiderwebs. A long-distance migrator, wintering in the tropics of Mexico and Central America.



in flight





SUMMER

## Green Heron

*Butorides virescens*

**Size:** 16–22" (41–56 cm)

**Male:** Short and stocky. Blue-green back and rust-red neck and breast. Dark-green crest. Short legs are normally yellow but turn bright orange during the breeding season.

**Female:** same as male

**Juvenile:** similar to adults, with a bluish-gray back and white-streaked breast and neck

**Nest:** platform; female and male build; 2 broods per year

**Eggs:** 2–4; light green without markings

**Incubation:** 21–25 days; female and male incubate

**Fledging:** 35–36 days; female and male feed the young

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

**Food:** small fish, aquatic insects, small amphibians

**Compare:** Tricolored Heron (p. 115) and Great Blue Heron (p. 305) are larger and have a long neck. Green Heron lacks the long neck of most other herons. Look for a small heron with a dark green back and crest stalking wetlands.

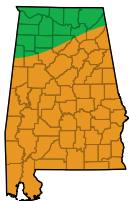
**Stan's Notes:** Often gives an explosive, rasping "skyew" call when startled. Holds its head close to its body, which sometimes makes it look like it doesn't have a neck. Waits on the shore or wades stealthily, hunting for small fish, aquatic insects and small amphibians. Places an object, such as an insect, on the water's surface to attract fish to catch. Raises its crest when excited. Nests in a tall tree, often a short distance from the water. Babies give a loud ticking sound, like the ticktock of a clock.

female  
p. 373



male





SUMMER  
MIGRATION

# 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 Orchard Oriole (p. 325) is much darker orange. Look for the flaming orange to identify the male Baltimore Oriole. Male American Redstart (p. 321) is smaller and has more black than orange.

**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 tops 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. Young males turn orange-and-black at 1½ years of age. Some of the last birds to arrive in spring and first to leave in fall. Seen during migration and summer.



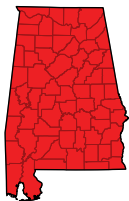
**male**



**female**  
**p. 167**



**juvenile**



YEAR-ROUND

## Northern Cardinal

*Cardinalis cardinalis*

**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

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

**Compare:** Similar size as the male Summer Tanager (p. 333), but the male Tanager is rosy red. 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. Makes short flights from cover to cover, often landing on the ground. *Cardinalis* denotes importance, as represented by the red priestly garments of Catholic cardinals.

**winter**



**in flight**



**breeding**







YEAR-ROUND

## Royal Tern

*Sterna maxima*

**Size:** 20" (50 cm)

**Male:** Gray back and upper surface of wings with white below. Large orange-red bill. Forked tail. Black legs and feet. Breeding plumage has a black cap extending down the nape. Winter plumage has a white forehead and only a partial black cap.

**Female:** same as male

**Juvenile:** dull-white to gray with only a hint of a black cap that rarely extends down the nape

**Nest:** ground; female and male build; 1–2 broods per year

**Eggs:** 1–2; off-white with dark brown markings

**Incubation:** 30–31 days; female and male incubate

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

**Migration:** non-migrator in Alabama

**Food:** fish, aquatic insects

**Compare:** Forster's Tern (p. 339) is smaller and has a small black-tipped bill. Least Tern (p. 337) is half the size and has a lighter orange-yellow bill and a shorter forked tail.

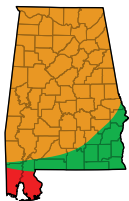
**Stan's Notes:** A year-round resident in Alabama. Nests in large colonies. Lays one egg (rarely two) in a shallow depression on the ground. Like other terns, Royal Terns plunge from heights 40 feet (12 m) and more into the water headfirst to capture fish and aquatic insects.





in flight





YEAR-ROUND  
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:** non-migrator to partial in Alabama, to southern coastal states and Mexico

**Food:** aquatic insects, small fish

**Compare:** Great Egret (p. 355) is much larger and has a yellow bill and black feet. Little Blue Heron (p. 113) is the same size and has a black-tipped gray bill. 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.



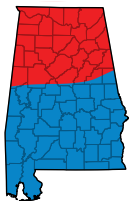
male



winter  
male



female



YEAR-ROUND  
WINTER

## 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

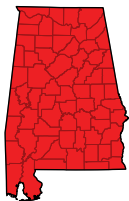
**Migration:** partial to non-migrator; small flocks of up to 20 birds move around to find food

**Food:** seeds, insects; will come to seed feeders

**Compare:** Male Yellow Warbler (p. 363) is all yellow with orange streaking on chest. The Pine Siskin (p. 121) has a streaked chest and belly and yellow wing bars. The female House Finch (p. 123) and female Purple Finch (p. 137) have heavily streaked chests.

**Stan's Notes:** A 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.





YEAR-ROUND

## Pine Warbler

*Setophaga pinus*

**Size:** 5½" (14 cm)

**Male:** A yellow throat and breast with faint black streaks on sides of breast. Olive-green back. Two white wing bars. White belly.

**Female:** similar to male, only paler

**Juvenile:** similar to adults, but is browner with more white on belly

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

**Eggs:** 3–5; white with brown markings

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

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

**Migration:** non-migrator in Alabama

**Food:** insects, seeds, fruit

**Compare:** Palm Warbler (p. 367) is similar, but it has a brown cap and yellow eyebrows. Pine Warbler has much more pronounced white wing bars than the Palm Warbler. The Yellow-rumped Warbler (p. 247) has yellow patches on its rump. The American Goldfinch (p. 357) lacks streaks on breast.

**Stan's Notes:** A common resident of pine forests in Alabama. Nests only in pine forest. Brighter in spring and more drab in fall, it varies in color depending upon the time of year. Thought to have a larger bill than the other warblers. Sometimes is easier to identify by its song than by sight. Listen for a twittering, musical song that varies in speed. While most warbler species are migratory, this one is non-migratory in Alabama. Populations increase each fall and winter with the arrival of northern birds.



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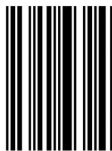
### About the Author

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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