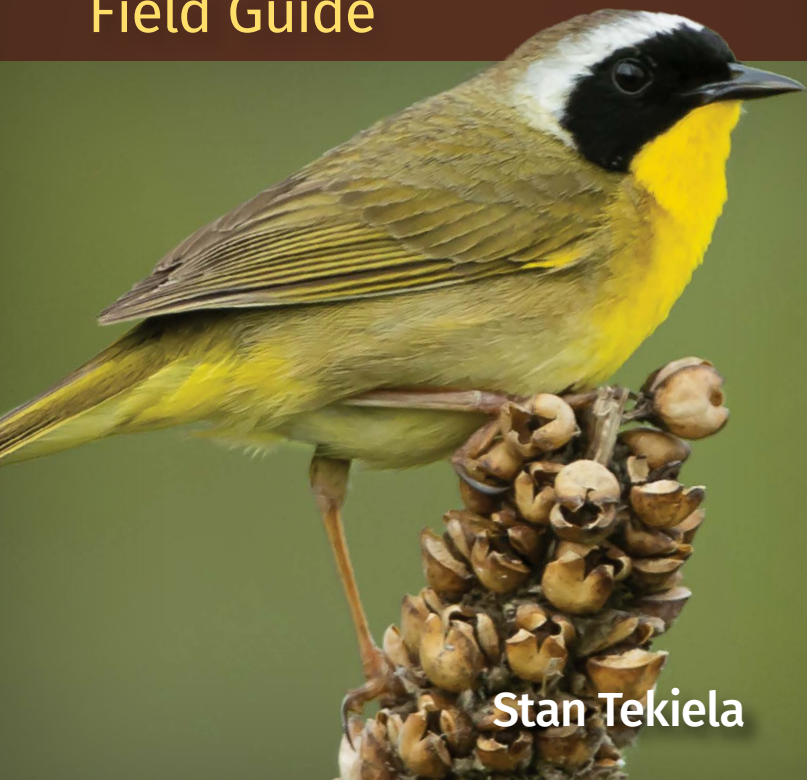


2ND EDITION

Birds *of* Maine

Field Guide



Stan Tekiela

Birds that are mostly black

p. 25



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. 265



Birds that have prominent orange

p. 275



Birds that have prominent red

p. 279



Birds that are mostly white

p. 291



Birds that have prominent yellow

p. 305



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OBSERVATION STRATEGIES: 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? Soaring in the sky? Is it perched high in the trees or hopping

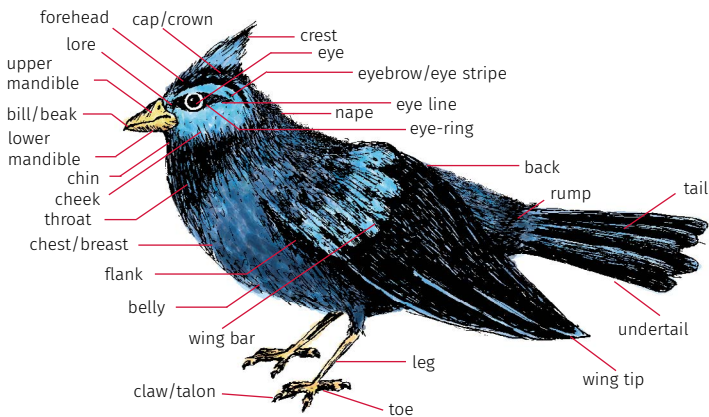
tive undulating pattern that makes it look like they're riding a roller coaster.

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



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.

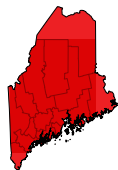
Each color section is also arranged by size, generally with the smaller birds first. Sections may also incorporate the average size in a range, which in some cases reflects size differences between male and female birds. Flip through the pages in the color section to find the bird. If you already know 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.

in flight





YEAR-ROUND

Common Raven

Corvus corax

Size: 22–27" (56–69 cm)

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

Female: same as male

Juvenile: same as adults

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 migrator; moves around to find food in winter

Food: insects, fruit, small animals, carrion

Compare: The American Crow (p. 37) is smaller and lacks the shaggy throat feathers. The Raven glides on flat, outstretched wings, unlike the slight V-shaped wing pattern of the Crow. Listen for the Raven's deep, raspy call to distinguish it from the Crow's higher-pitched call.

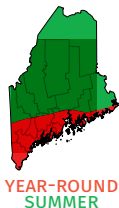
Stan's Notes: Considered by some to be the smartest of all birds. Known for its aerial acrobatics and long, swooping dives. Sometimes scavenges with crows and gulls. A cooperative hunter that often communicates the location of a food source to other ravens. Most start to breed at 3–4 years. Complex courtship includes grabbing bills, preening each other and cooing. Long-term pair bond. Uses the same nest site for many years.

female
p. 189



male





Hooded Merganser

Lophodytes cucullatus

Size: 16–19" (41–48 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 coastal states and Mexico

Food: small fish, aquatic insects, crustaceans

Compare: The male Bufflehead (p. 63) is smaller and has white sides. The male Wood Duck (p. 267) has a green head. The male Common Merganser (p. 273) is much larger. The white patch on the head and rust-brown sides distinguish the male Hoodie.

Stan's Notes: A small diving duck, found in shallow ponds, sloughs, lakes, and rivers, usually in small groups. It is a summer breeding duck in Maine, rarely seen away from wooded areas, where it nests in natural cavities or nest boxes. 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 mergansers, goldeneyes, or Wood Ducks (egg dumping), resulting in 20–25 eggs in some nests. Rarely, she shares a nest, sitting with a Wood Duck. Not as common as the Common Merganser.



male



female



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

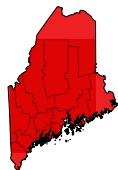
Migration: complete to non-migrator, to southern states

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

Compare: The male Indigo Bunting (p. 83) is nearly all blue. The Blue Jay (p. 93) 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. Nearly eliminated from Maine due to a lack of nest cavities. Thanks to people who installed thousands of nestboxes, 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 churlee." The rust-red breast is like that of the American Robin, its cousin. The young of the first brood help raise the second brood.





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





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

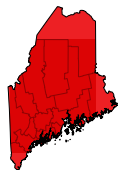
Migration: partial migrator to non-migrator; moves around to find food

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

Compare: Broad-winged Hawk (p. 181), Cooper's Hawk (p. 255), Red-shouldered Hawk (p. 183), and Sharp-shinned Hawk (p. 251) 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. 247) has a black collar on the nape. The Mourning Dove (p. 163) 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





Great Blue Heron

Ardea herodias

Size: 42–48" (107–122 cm); up to 6' wingspan

Male: Tall and gray. Black eyebrows end in long plumes at the back of the head. Long yellow bill. Long feathers at the base of the neck drop down in a kind of necklace. Long legs.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: same as adults, but more brown than gray, with a black crown; lacks plumes

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

Eggs: 3–5; blue-green without markings

Incubation: 27–28 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 56–60 days; male and female feed the young

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

Food: small fish, frogs, insects, snakes, baby birds

Compare: Great Egret (p. 303) is similar in shape, but it is smaller and all white. Look for the long, yellow bill to help identify the Great Blue Heron.

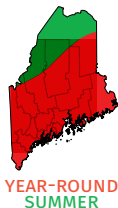
Stan's Notes: One of the most common herons. Found in open water, from small ponds to large lakes. Stalks small fish in shallow water. Will strike at mice, squirrels, and nearly anything it comes across. In flight, it holds its neck in an S shape and slightly cups its wings, while the legs trail straight out behind. Nests in a colony of up to 100 birds. Nests in trees near or hanging over water. Barks like a dog when startled. Most common along the coast.

female
p. 197



male





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: complete, to southern states; non-migrator in parts of Maine

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

Compare: Most people recognize this common duck. The male Red-breasted Merganser (p. 271) is smaller, lacking the Merganser's shaggy crest and large orange bill. Look for the green head and yellow bill to identify the male Mallard.

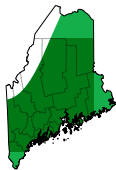
Stan's Notes: A familiar dabbling duck of lakes and ponds. Also found in rivers, streams, and some backyards. Tips forward to feed on vegetation on the bottom of shallow water. The name "Mallard" comes from the Latin word *masculus*, meaning "male," referring to the male's habit of taking no part in 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. 321



male





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

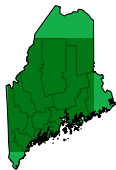
Migration: complete, to southern states, Mexico, Central America, and South America

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

Compare: The male American Redstart (p. 275) has much less 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.





SUMMER

Scarlet Tanager

Piranga olivacea

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Bright scarlet with coal-black wings and tail. Ivory bill and dark eyes.

Female: drab greenish yellow with olive wings and tail, whitish wing linings and dark eyes

Juvenile: same as female

Nest: cup; female builds; 1 brood per year

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

Incubation: 13–14 days; female incubates

Fledging: 9–11 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to Central and South America

Food: insects, fruit

Compare: The male Northern Cardinal (p. 285) is larger, with a black mask and red bill. Look for the black wings and tail to help identify the male Scarlet Tanager.

Stan's Notes: A tropical-looking bird. Found in mature deciduous woodlands, where it hunts for insects high up in trees. Requires a territory covering at least 4 acres (1.5 ha) for nesting but prefers 8 acres (3 ha). Arrives late in spring and leaves early in fall. Male and female both sing like American Robins, but the tanagers intersperse an unusual “chick-burr” call in their songs. The song of the female is like that of the male, only softer. This bird is one of hundreds of tanager species in the world. Nearly all are brightly colored and live in the tropics. The name “Tanager” comes from a South American Tupi Indian word meaning “any small, brightly colored bird.” The male sheds (molts) his bright-scarlet plumage in the fall, appearing more like the female during winter.

in flight



breeding



juvenile



winter





Herring Gull

Larus argentatus

Size: 23–26" (58–66 cm); up to 5' wingspan

Male: White with slate-gray wings. Black wing tips with tiny white spots. Yellow bill with an orange-red spot near the tip of the lower bill (mandible). Pinkish legs and feet. Winter plumage has gray speckles on head and neck.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: mottled brown to gray, with a black bill

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

Eggs: 2–3; olive with brown markings

Incubation: 24–28 days; female and male incubate

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

Migration: complete, to coasts that remain unfrozen in North America; non-migrator in parts of Maine

Food: fish, insects, clams, eggs, baby birds

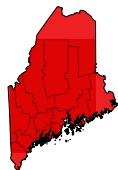
Compare: Ring-billed Gull (p. 297) is smaller and has yellowish legs and feet and a black ring on its bill. Look for the orange-red spot on the bill to help identify the Herring Gull.

Stan's Notes: A common gull of large lakes. An opportunistic bird, scavenging for human food in dumpsters, parking lots, and other places with garbage. Takes eggs and young from other bird nests. Often drops clams and other shellfish from heights to break the shells and get to the soft interior. Nests in colonies, returning to the same site annually. Lines its nest with grass and seaweed. It takes about four years for the juveniles to obtain adult plumage. Adults have spotted heads during winter.

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 migrator to non-migrator; small flocks of up to 20 birds move around North America; small percentage in Maine will not migrate

Food: seeds, insects; comes to seed feeders

Compare: The male Yellow Warbler (p. 313) 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. 121) have heavily streaked chests.

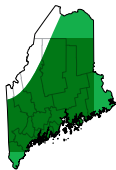
Stan's Notes: Common backyard resident. Most often found in open fields, scrubby areas, and woodlands. Enjoys Nyjer seed in feeders. Breeds in late summer. Lines its nest with the silky down from wild thistle. Almost always in small flocks. Twitters while it flies. Flight is roller coaster-like. Moves 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.

male
p. 277



female





SUMMER

Baltimore Oriole

Icterus galbula

Size: 7–8" (18–20 cm)

Female: Pale yellow with orange tones and gray-brown wings with white wing bars. Gray bill. Dark eyes.

Male: flaming orange with a black head and back, white-and-orange wing bars, an orange-and-black tail, a gray bill and 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 southern states, Mexico, Central America, and South America

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

Compare: Often confused with the female Scarlet Tanager (p. 319), which has olive-colored wings. Look for the gray-brown wings to identify the female Baltimore Oriole.

Stan's Notes: A fantastic songster, often heard before seen. Easily attracted to bird feeders that offer sugar water (nectar), orange halves, or grape jelly. Parents bring 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.

Maine's Best-Selling Bird Guide

Make bird watching more informative and enjoyable

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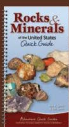
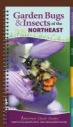
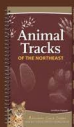
This 2nd Edition includes 6 new species, updated photographs and range maps, expanded information in Stan's Notes, and much more!



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.

IDENTIFY NATURE WITH THE ADVENTURE QUICK GUIDES



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