

THE Kids' Guide TO

Birds OF Colorado

Fun Facts, Activities and 87 Cool Birds



Stan Tekiela

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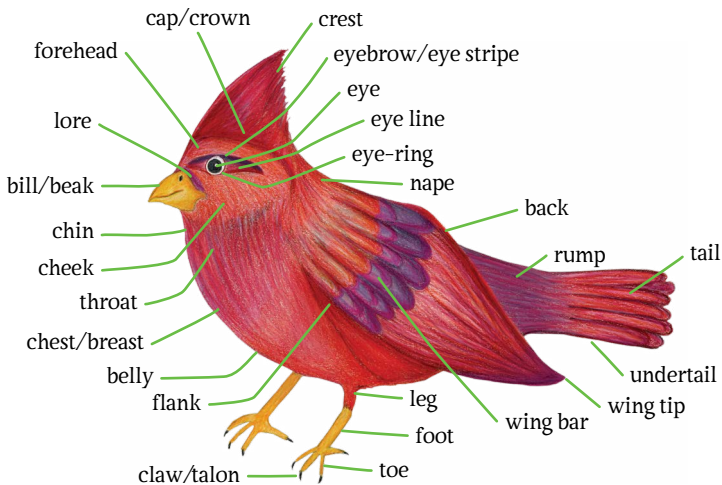
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BODY BASICS OF A BIRD

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

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



AMAZING NESTS

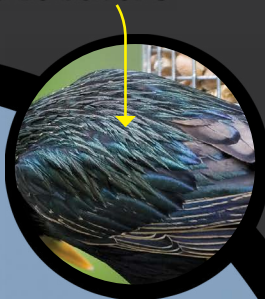
I am fascinated with bird nests! They are amazing structures that do more than just provide a place for egg laying. Nests create a small climate-controlled environment that's beneficial for both keeping the eggs warm and raising the young after they hatch.

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

European Starling

Look for the glittering, iridescent feathers

BREEDING



What to look for:

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

Where you'll find them:

lines up with other starlings on power lines; found in all **habitats** but usually associated with people, farms, suburban yards and cities

Calls and songs:

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

On the move:

large family groups gather with blackbirds in fall

What they eat:

bugs, seeds and fruit; visits seed and **suet** feeders

Nest:

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

Eggs, chicks and childcare:

4–6 bluish eggs with brown marks; Mom and Dad sit on the eggs and feed the babies

Spends the winter:

in Colorado; moves around to find food

Size
7½"



Nest
CAVITY



Feeder
**TUBE OR
HOPPER**



year-round



SAW IT!



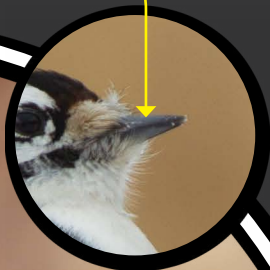
STAN'S COOL STUFF

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

Downy Woodpecker

Look for the small, short bill

MALE



FEMALE

What to look for:

spotted wings, white belly, red mark on the back of the head and a small, short bill; female lacks a red mark on the head

Where you'll find them:

wherever trees are present

Calls and songs:

repeats a high-pitched "peek-peek" **call**; drums on trees or logs with its bill to announce its territory

On the move:

flies in an up-and-down pattern; makes short flights from tree to tree

What they eat:

insects and seeds; visits **suet** and seed feeders

Nest:

cavity in a dead tree; digs out a perfectly round entrance hole; the bottom of the cavity is wider than the top, and it's lined with fallen woodchips

Eggs, chicks and childcare:

3–5 white eggs; Mom **incubates** the eggs; both parents take care of the kiddies

Spends the winter:

doesn't **migrate**; stays in Colorado year-round

REAL QUICK

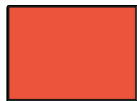
Size
6"



Nest
CAVITY



Feeder
SUET



year-round



SAW IT!



STAN'S COOL STUFF

The Downy is abundant and widespread where trees are present. Like other woodpeckers, it pulls insects from tiny places with its long, barbed tongue. It has stiff tail feathers, which help to support it as it clings to trees. During winter, it will roost in a cavity.

Blue Jay

Look for the large crest



Size
12"



Nest
CUP



Feeder
HOPPER



year-round



SAW IT!



What to look for:

vivid blue bird with a black **necklace**; a large crest, which the jay raises and lowers at will

Where you'll find them:

in wooded areas and all around your backyard in low elevations

Calls and songs:

loud, noisy and mimics other birds; screams like a hawk around feeders to scare away other birds

On the move:

carries seeds and nuts in a pouch under its tongue during flight

What they eat:

insects, fruit, seeds, nuts, bird eggs and babies in other nests; visits seed feeders, ground feeders with corn and any feeder with peanuts

Nest:

cup of twigs in a tree, near the main trunk

Eggs, chicks and childcare:

4–5 speckled green-to-blue eggs; Mom sits on the eggs; Mom and Dad feed the little ones

Spends the winter:

in Colorado; moves around to find an abundant source of food

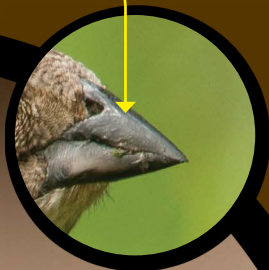
STAN'S COOL STUFF

Blue Jays are very intelligent. They store food in hiding places, called caches, to eat later. They can remember where they hide thousands of nuts! Jays are known as the alarm of the forest, screaming at intruders in the woods.

Brown-headed Cowbird

Look for the pointed gray bill

FEMALE



MALE
pg. 19

What to look for:

brown bird with a sharp, pointed gray bill

Where you'll find them:

forest edges, open fields, farmlands and backyards

Calls and songs:

sings a low, gurgling song that sounds like water moving; cowbird young are raised by other bird parents, but they still end up singing and calling like their own parents, without ever hearing them

On the move:

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

What they eat:

insects and seeds; visits seed feeders

Nest:

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

Eggs, chicks and childcare:

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

Spends the winter:

in southwestern states and Mexico

Size
7½"

Nest
NONE



Feeder
**TUBE OR
HOPPER**



summer



SAW IT!



STAN'S COOL STUFF

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

Northern Mockingbird

Look for the white wing patches



Size
10"



Nest
CUP

Feeder
NONE



summer

What to look for:

silver-gray head and back, a light gray chest and belly, white wing patches, a mostly black tail with white outer tail feathers

Where to find them:

on top of a shrub, where it sits for long periods; parks and yards

Calls and songs:

imitates or mocks other birds (vocal mimicry); young males often sing at night

On the move:

very lively, spreading its wings, flashing its white wing patches and wagging its tail; wing patches flash during flight or **display**

What they eat:

insects and fruit

Nest:

cup; Mom and Dad work together to build it

Eggs, chicks and childcare:

3–5 speckled blue-green eggs; Mom sits on the eggs to **incubate**; Mom and Dad feed their young

Spends the winter:

in southwestern states and Mexico



SAW IT!



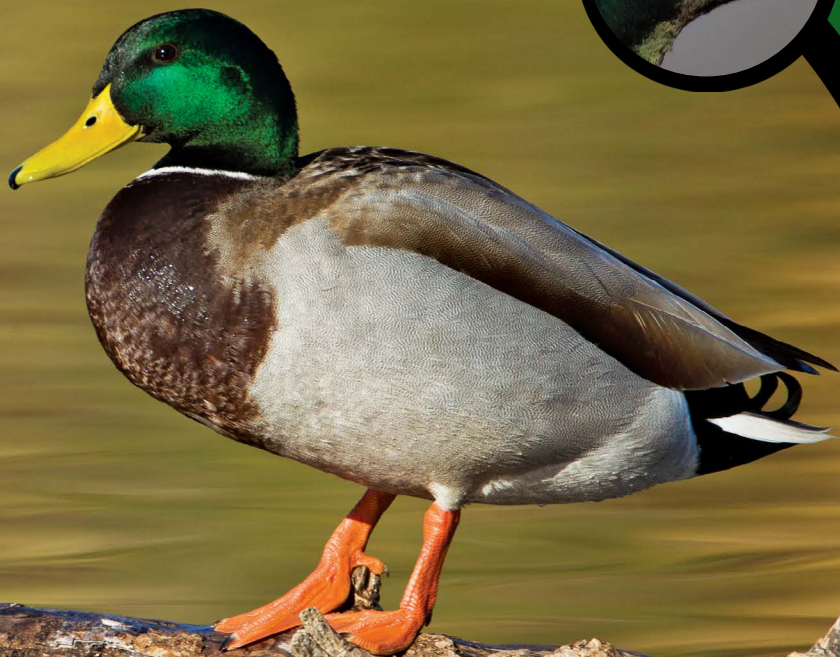
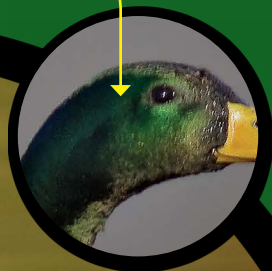
STAN'S COOL STUFF

Mockingbirds perform a fantastic mating dance. Pairs hold up their heads and tails and run toward each other. They flash their wing patches, and then retreat to nearby **cover**. Usually they're not afraid of people, so you may be able to get a close look.

Mallard

Look for the green head

MALE



FEMALE
pg. 117

Size
19-21"



Nest
GROUND



Feeder
GROUND



year-round
summer
migration

What to look for:

green head with a white **necklace**, rusty-brown chest, gray sides, yellow bill, orange legs and feet

Where you'll find them:

lakes and ponds, rivers and streams, and maybe even your backyard

Calls and songs:

the male doesn't quack; when you think of how a duck sounds, it's based on the female Mallard's classic loud quack

On the move:

sometimes in huge **flocks** with hundreds of ducks; mostly in small flocks of 6-10, especially in spring

What they eat:

seeds, aquatic plants and insects; visits ground feeders offering corn

Nest:

ground nest; Mom builds it from plants nearby

Eggs, chicks and childcare:

7-10 greenish-to-whitish eggs; Mom **incubates** the eggs and leads the young to food

Spends the winter:

in Colorado, moving around to find open water and food; many **migrate** to southwestern states



SAW IT!



STAN'S COOL STUFF

This is a dabbling duck, tipping forward in shallow water to eat plants on the bottom. Only the male has black feathers in the center of its tail that curl upward. The name "Mallard" means "male" and refers to the males, which don't help raise their young.

Bullock's Oriole

Look for the black eye line

MALE



FEMALE
pg. 215

What to look for:

a bright orange-and-black bird with a black crown, eye line, **nape**, chin, back and wings, and a bold white patch on the wings

Where you'll find them:

cottonwood groves, open forests

Calls and songs:

a rich musical song

On the move:

slow direct flight from tree to tree

What they eat:

insects, berries and **nectar**; comes to nectar, orange-half and grape jelly feeders

Nest:

pendulous; Mom and Dad build it

Eggs, chicks and childcare:

4–6 pale white-to-gray eggs with brown marks; Mom sits on the eggs; Mom and Dad feed the children

Spends the winter:

in Mexico and Central America

Size
8"



Nest
PENDULOUS



Feeder
NECTAR



summer



SAW IT!



STAN'S COOL STUFF

Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles are closely related and were once considered the same species. These birds are more common in eastern Colorado, where cottonwood trees grow. They use long plant fibers to create a sock-like nest.

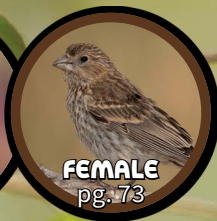
House Finch

Look for the reddish face and the brown cap

MALE



**YELLOW
MALE**



FEMALE
pg. 73

What to look for:

red-to-orange face, throat, chest and rump, and a brown cap

Where you'll find them:

forests, city and suburban areas, around homes, parks and farms

Calls and songs:

male sings a loud, cheerful warbling song

On the move:

moves around in small family units; never travels long distances

What they eat:

seeds, fruit and leaf buds; comes to seed feeders and feeders with a glop of grape jelly

Nest:

cup, but occasionally in a cavity; likes to nest in a hanging flower basket or on a front door wreath

Eggs, chicks and childcare:

4–5 pale blue eggs, lightly marked; Mom sits on the eggs, and Dad feeds her while she **incubates**; Mom and Dad feed the **brood**

Spends the winter:

in Colorado; moves around to find food

Size
5"



Nest
CUP



Feeder
TUBE OR
HOPPER



year-round



SAW IT!

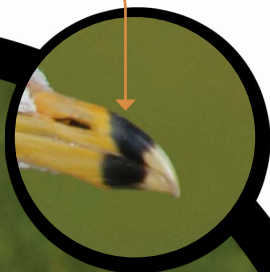
STAN'S COOL STUFF

The House Finch is very social and is found across the country. It can be a common bird at feeders. Unfortunately, it suffers from a fatal eye disease that causes the eyes to crust over. It's rare to see a yellow male; yellow **plumage** may be a result of a poor diet.

Ring-billed Gull

Look for the black ring on the bill

BREEDING



Size
18–20"



Nest
GROUND

Feeder
NONE



year-round
migration

What to look for:

white gull with gray wings and a yellow bill with a black ring near the tip; winter **plumage** has speckles on the head and neck

Where you'll find them:

shores of large lakes and rivers; often at garbage dumps and parking lots

Calls and songs:

calls out a wide variety of loud, rising squawks and squeals—classic gull sounds

On the move:

strong flight with constant wing flaps

What they eat:

insects and fish; it also picks through garbage, scavenging for other food

Nest:

ground nest; defends a small area around it

Eggs, chicks and childcare:

2–4 off-white eggs with brown marks; Mom and Dad take turns **incubating** the eggs and feeding their young

Spends the winter:

some stay in Colorado; others **migrate** to southern states



SAW IT!



STAN'S COOL STUFF

This is one of the most common gulls in the country. Hundreds of these birds often flock together. The ring on the bill appears after the first winter. In the fall of the first three years, the birds have a different plumage. In the third year, they grow adult plumage.

American Goldfinch

Look for the black forehead

MALE



FEMALE



REAL QUICK

Size
5"



Nest
CUP



Feeder
TUBE OR
HOPPER



year-round

What to look for:

male is a bright canary-yellow bird with a black forehead, wings and tail; female is olive-yellow and lacks a black forehead; winter male resembles the female

Where you'll find them:

open fields, scrubby areas, woodlands, backyards

Calls and songs:

male sings a pleasant high-pitched song; gives **twitter calls** during flight

On the move:

appears roller coaster-like in flight

What they eat:

loves seeds and insects; comes to seed (especially thistle) feeders

Nest:

cup; builds its nest in late summer and lines the cup with the soft, silky down from wild thistle

Eggs, chicks and childcare:

4–6 pale blue eggs; Mom **incubates** the eggs, and Dad pitches in to help her feed the babies

Spends the winter:

in Colorado; moves around to find food



SAW IT!



STAN'S COOL STUFF

The American Goldfinch is often called Wild Canary due to its canary-colored **plumage**. This cute little feeder bird is almost always in small **flocks**, visiting thistle tube feeders that offer Nyjer seed. This is a late-nesting bird, with most nesting in August.



The Must-Have Beginner's Guide to Bird Watching

Stan Tekiela's famous *Birds of Colorado Field Guide* has delighted bird watchers for many years. Now, the award-winning author has written the perfect bird identification guide for children and grandchildren!

Inside You'll Find

- 87 of the most common and important Colorado birds to know
- Species organized by color for quick and easy identification
- Full-color photographs and full page of information for each bird
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