

THE Kids' Guide TO Birds OF Pennsylvania

Fun Facts, Activities, and 88 Cool Birds



Stan Tekiela

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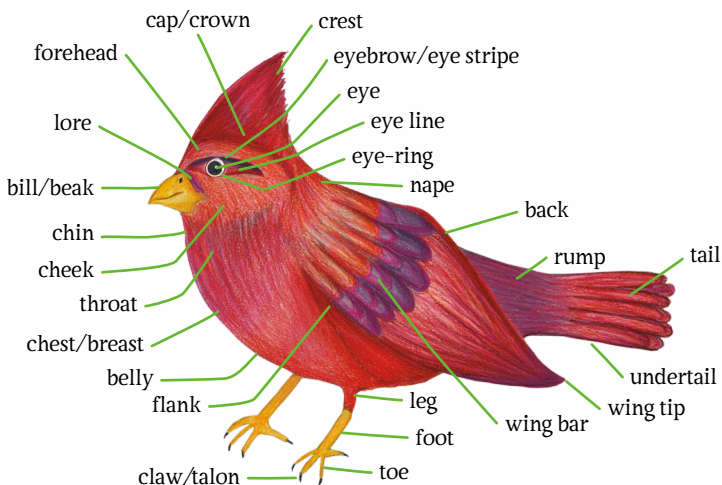
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BODY BASICS OF A BIRD

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.



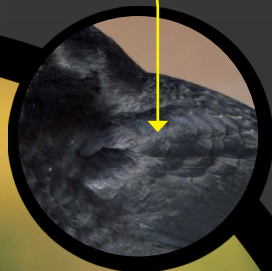
AMAZING NESTS

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,

American Crow

Look for the glossy black feathers



What to look for:

glossy black all over and a black bill

Where you'll find them:

all habitats—wilderness, rural, suburban, cities

Calls and songs:

a harsh “caw” **call**; imitates other birds and people

On the move:

flaps constantly and glides downward; moves around to find food; gathers in huge communal flocks of more than 10,000 birds during winter

What they eat:

fruit, insects, mammals, fish, and dead carcasses (**carrion**); visits seed and **suet** feeders

Nest:

platform; adds bright or shiny items and often uses the same site every year if a Great Horned Owl (pg. 141) hasn't taken it

Eggs, chicks, and childcare:

4–6 speckled bluish-to-olive eggs; Mom sits on the eggs; Mom and Dad feed the youngsters

Spends the winter:

in Pennsylvania; moves around in to find food

Size
18"



Nest

PLATFORM



Feeder

HOPPER



year-round



SAW IT!

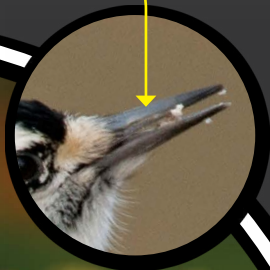
**STAN'S COOL STUFF**

The crow is one of the smartest of all birds. It's very social and often entertains itself by chasing other birds. It eats roadkill but avoids being hit by vehicles. Some can live as long as 20 years! Crows without mates, called helpers, help to raise the young.

Hairy Woodpecker

Look for the large bill

MALE



FEMALE



What to look for:

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

Where you'll find them:

forests and wooded backyards, parks

Calls and songs:

a sharp chirp before landing on feeders; drums on hollow logs, branches, or stovepipes in spring

On the move:

short up-and-down flights from tree to tree with rapid wingbeats

What they eat:

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

Nest:

cavity; prefers a live tree; excavates a larger, more oval entry than the round hole of the Downy Woodpecker (pg. 41); usually excavates under a branch, which helps to shield the entrance

Eggs, chicks, and childcare:

3–6 white eggs; parents sit on the eggs and bring food to feed their babies

Spends the winter:

in Pennsylvania

REAL QUICK

Size
9"



Nest
CAVITY



Feeder
SUET



year-round



SAW IT!

**STAN'S COOL STUFF**

The Hairy is nearly identical to the Downy Woodpecker, but it's larger and has a larger, longer bill. It has a barbed tongue, which it uses to pull out bugs from trees. At the base of its bill, tiny bristle-like feathers protect its nostrils from excavated wood dust.

Blue Jay

Look for the large crest



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 the woods and all around your backyard

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 Pennsylvania; moves around to find an abundant source of food

Size
12"



Nest
CUP



Feeder
HOPPER



year-round



SAW IT!



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 hid thousands of nuts! Jays will imitate hawks to scare off other birds at feeders before they land to get the food.

Northern Shoveler

Look for the large, shovel-like bill

FEMALE



MALE
pg. 187

Size
19-21"



Nest
GROUND

Feeder
NONE



migration
winter

What to look for:

brown duck with black speckles, green wing mark (**speculum**) and a super-large, spoon-shaped bill

Where you'll find them:

shallow wetlands, ponds, and small lakes

Calls and songs:

female gives a classic quack; male gives a crazy-sounding combination of popping and quacking, calling "puk-puk, puk-puk, puk-puk"

On the move:

swims in tight circles, stirring up insects to eat; small flocks of 5-10 birds swim with bills pointing toward the water; flocks fly in tight formation

What they eat:

enjoys aquatic insects; likes plants, too

Nest:

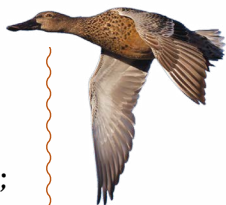
ground; Mom gathers plant material and forms it into a circle a short distance from the water

Eggs, chicks & childcare:

9-12 olive eggs; Mom sits on the eggs and leads her little shovelers to food

Spends the winter:

in southern states, Mexico, and Central America; a few winter in parts of Pennsylvania



SAW IT!



STAN'S COOL STUFF

The Northern Shoveler is a medium-sized duck. It is the only shoveler species found in North America. The name "Shoveler" refers to its peculiar, shovel-like bill. It feeds by using its bill to sift tiny aquatic insects and plants floating on the water's surface.

Northern Mockingbird

Look for the white wing patches



Size
10"



Nest
CUP

Feeder
NONE



year-round

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 Pennsylvania; moves around to find food



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.

Wood Duck

Look for the boldly patterned head

MALE



FEMALE
pg. 131

Size
17-20"Nest
CAVITYFeeder
NONE**summer****SAW IT!****What to look for:**

boldly patterned head and crest with bold white outlines; rusty chest and white belly

Where you'll find them:

quiet, shallow ponds and deep in the woods, high up on tree branches

Calls and songs:

male calls a zipper-like "zeeeet"; female calls "oo-eek, oo-eek" loudly when startled and at takeoff

On the move:

blasts off from the water with loud calls and noisy wings; flies quickly through forest; enters cavity nest from full flight; small, tight group flights

What they eat:

aquatic insects, plants, and seeds

Nest:

cavity; adds a lining of soft, downy feathers in an old woodpecker hole or a nest box

Eggs, chicks & childcare:

10-15 creamy-white eggs; only Mom incubates the eggs and shows the kids how to feed

Spends the winter:

in southern states

STAN'S COOL STUFF

This is a small dabbling duck. The female will lay some eggs in a neighbor's nest (**egg dumping**), sometimes resulting in 20 or more eggs in a nest! The young stay in the nest for 24 hours, and then jump down to follow their mother. They never return to the nest.

Baltimore Oriole

Look for the black head

MALE



FEMALE
pg. 217

What to look for:

flaming orange bird with a black head and back, and black wings with white wing bars

Where you'll find them:

parks, yards and forests; in treetops, where it feeds on caterpillars

Calls and songs:

a fantastic songster, singing loudly; often heard before it is seen

On the move:

often returns to the same area year after year

What they eat:

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

Nest:

pendulous; an interesting nest that looks like a sock hanging from an outer branch of a tall tree

Eggs, chicks, and childcare:

4–5 bluish eggs with brown marks; Mom sits on the eggs; Mom and Dad do the childcare

Spends the winter:

in Mexico, Central America, and South America

Size
7–8"



Nest
PENDULOUS



Feeder
NECTAR



summer



SAW IT!



STAN'S COOL STUFF

Orioles come to feeders that offer sugar water (nectar), orange halves, or grape jelly. Parents bring their young to feeders. Young males turn orange and black at 1½ years. Members of the blackbird family; closely related to grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds.

Northern Cardinal

Look for the black mask

MALE



FEMALE
pg. 107

What to look for:

all-red bird with a black mask, and a large red crest and bill

Where you'll find them:

wide variety of habitats including backyards and parks; usually likes thick **vegetation**

Calls and songs:

calls "whata-cheer-cheer-cheer" in spring; both male and female sing and give chip notes all year

On the move:

short flights from **cover** to cover, often landing on the ground

What they eat:

loves sunflower seeds and enjoys insects, fruit, peanuts, and **suet**; visits seed feeders

Nest:

cup of twigs and bark strips, often low in a tree

Eggs, chicks, and childcare:

3-4 speckled bluish-white eggs; Mom and Dad share the incubating and feeding duties

Spends the winter:

doesn't **migrate**; gathers with other cardinals and moves around to find good sources of food

Size
8-9"



Nest
CUP



Feeder
TUBE OR
HOPPER



year-round



SAW IT!



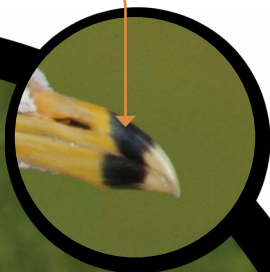
STAN'S COOL STUFF

Cardinals are sunbathers! Sometimes they stretch out in the sun, spreading their wings and fanning their tails. They're the first to arrive at feeders in the morning and the last to leave before dark. They are territorial and fight their own reflections in windows.

Ring-billed Gull

Look for the black ring on the bill

BREEDING



WINTER

Size
18–20"



Nest
GROUND

Feeder
NONE



year-round
migration
winter

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; 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:

in northwestern and southeastern Pennsylvania, southern states, and Mexico



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 3 years, the birds have a different plumage. In the third year, they grow adult plumage.

American Goldfinch

Look for the black forehead

MALE



FEMALE



What to look for:

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 Pennsylvania and southern states; flocks of up to 20 birds move around in winter to find food

Size
5"



Nest
CUP



Feeder
TUBE OR
HOPPER



year-round



SAW IT!



STAN'S COOL STUFF

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



The Must-Have Beginner's Guide to Bird Watching

Stan Tekiela's famous *Birds of Pennsylvania 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

- 88 of the most common and important Pennsylvania birds to know
- Species organized by color for quick and easy identification
- Full-color photographs and a full page of information for each bird
- Field marks, favorite hangouts, range maps, Stan's cool facts, and more
- **BONUS:** Fun activities for the whole family to enjoy

**The perfect introduction to bird identification
for a new generation**

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