

BECOME AN EXPERT BIRDWATCHER WITH THIS FIELD GUIDE FOR KIDS!

Grab your binoculars and get ready to jump into the fascinating world of birds! *A Kid's Guide to Backyard Birds* is an essential handbook for young bird enthusiasts aged 6 to 8. You'll discover fascinating facts about the United States' most common birds, as well as a DIY project, a log for keeping track of your finds, important information on protecting birds, and a glossary of bird-related terms.

This portable guide—perfect for your back pocket, school bag, or even the basket on your bike—will help you explore the amazing world just outside your door!



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A Kid's Guide to BACKYARD BIRDS

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A Kid's Guide to BACKYARD BIRDS



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INTRODUCTION

Whether you have been interested in birds for a long time or are just starting to appreciate our feathered friends, it's easy to become a bird-watcher!

There are three very simple steps to basic birding:

1. GO OUTSIDE
2. KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED
3. KEEP YOUR EARS OPEN



Every time you leave your house, there are opportunities to spot birds. On your walk to the school bus? Birds are flying between the trees! Playing catch in your backyard? Birds are building a nest in a shrub! Outside at recess? Birds are hopping in the grass looking for earthworms (or leftover bits of your lunch)! Birds are everywhere, and once you take the time to look for them, you'll be surprised by how many birds you see (or hear!) in a day.

This book will get you familiar with the 40 birds you're most likely to see in the United States year-round. You'll learn what they eat, what they use to build their nests, and so much more. In a banner at the top of each page, you'll even get to learn their common name *and* their scientific, also known as their Latin name! At the back of the book, there's a bird log to help you keep track of all the birds you have spotted and a glossary where you can find definitions of words found throughout the text. How many of the birds in this book can you find?

The beauty of birding is that anyone can do it. You don't need any fancy equipment to get started. The more time you spend outside, the more birds you'll see. And the more birds you see, the more you will come to appreciate the wonders of these special creatures!



DIY PROJECT

The best way to attract birds to your backyard is to offer them a delicious homemade treat. Making your own bird feeders is easy and fun. Here's a basic recipe that will attract many different types of birds to your yard.

First, cut the **apple** in half lengthwise. Use your **spoon** to scoop out the seeds from both halves. In a bowl, mix the **sunflower seeds** and **millet**. Spread the **peanut butter** on each apple half. Then press the halves into the sunflower seed and millet mixture. The peanut butter should help everything stick together. With an adult's help, make a hole at the top of each apple half and slip through a piece of **twine**. Tie a knot to join the ends of the twine, and you're done!

You now have two bird feeders. Hang them on trees and enjoy the sights and sounds that they bring to your yard.





CHIP!

SIZE
Length: 8 to 9 inches
Wingspan: 10 to 12 inches

NORTHERN CARDINAL

Cardinalis cardinalis



■ YEAR-ROUND

HABITAT & RANGE

Cardinals live in a variety of **habitats**. They look for areas that are thick with shrubs and **foliage**. They used to be found only in warmer climates, but are now spotted all over the eastern United States.

When you spot a bright red Northern Cardinal, you can be sure it's a male. The female is more of a grayish color, with some red in its wing feathers and a red-tipped **crest**. Cardinals are known for their sweet singing. They are also known to be tough. The males will attack any bird that threatens their territory.

NEST

They build their nests in trees or shrubs, about 1 to 15 feet high. They use twigs, leaves, bark, grasses, stems, and small roots to build their nests (which are only 2 to 3 inches tall!).

FOOD

Northern Cardinals eat fruits, including wild grapes and blackberries. They also eat seeds (sunflower seeds are their favorite) and many kinds of insects, including centipedes and katydids.



EGG



Average size = 1 in. long

FUN FACT

These seven U.S. states call the Northern Cardinal their state bird: Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia.



PO-TA-TO-CHIP!

SIZE

Length: 4 to 5 inches
Wingspan: 7½ to 9 inches

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

Spinus tristis



■ YEAR-ROUND

HABITAT & RANGE

American Goldfinches live all over the United States. They avoid deep forests and prefer open areas. They are drawn to backyards all over the continent to visit bird feeders.

The American Goldfinch is known for its eye-catching feathers. In the warmer months, they are bright yellow and black with white streaks on their wings and tails. In the winter, their feathers fade to brown. You can easily tell the males from the females. The males have brighter feathers and a black spot on their foreheads.

NEST

To build their nests, goldfinches weave together small roots and bits of plant material. Their nests can be so tightly woven that they hold water. They also use spider silk to make a soft lining in their nests. Spider silk is the hairlike wisps that make up spiderwebs!

FOOD

Goldfinches are vegetarians and they eat mostly seeds. (But they may accidentally eat an insect from time to time.)



EGG



Average size = 1½ in. long

FUN FACT

American Goldfinches change color twice a year. They do this by shedding their feathers and growing new ones, a process called **molting**.



EUROPEAN STARLING

Sturnus vulgaris



■ YEAR-ROUND

HABITAT & RANGE

Starlings live in towns and cities throughout much of the United States. They like to be near open, grassy fields. There, they can look for food. They often use man-made structures for nesting purposes.

European Starlings are easiest to spot in the warmer months. In spring and summer, they sport dark iridescent feathers that look green and purple in bright light. Their coloring helps them attract a mate before **breeding** season. In the cooler months, they take on a less flashy look, with brown feathers that show spots of white.

NEST

European Starlings will look for a hole about 10 to 25 feet high in which to nest. It could be a hole in a tree left by a woodpecker, but it's often an empty space or gap in a building or streetlight. The nest is built on a base of grass and pine needles, with feathers, bits of string, and other trash.

EGG



Average size = 1 in. long

FOOD

They prefer to eat insects such as grasshoppers, caterpillars, and spiders, but they will eat almost anything, including fruit, seeds, and even garbage.



FUN FACT

European Starlings did not exist in the United States until 1890. At that time, 60 birds were brought from Europe and set free in Central Park. Now there are over 200 million!

I IMITATE!

SIZE

Length: 8 to 9 inches
Wingspan: 12 to 16 inches



ROH-ROH-ROH!

SIZE

Length: 38 to 54 inches
Wingspan: 66 to 80 inches

GREAT BLUE HERON

Ardea herodias

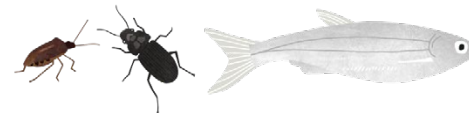
The Great Blue Heron is the largest heron in the United States. Their open wings span 6 feet! You won't find a Great Blue Heron in your backyard. They live near water and are not social with humans. It's best to observe these stately birds from a distance.

NEST

Great Blue Herons nest in colonies. That means many other herons are nearby, also busily building nests and preparing for hatchlings. They usually build their nests in trees, about 100 feet high. A male chooses the site and gathers materials like sticks, moss, and dry grass. The female then weaves the nest, which can be as large as 4 feet wide!

FOOD

They love to eat fish. They will stand very still in water, waiting for their next meal. When a fish swims by, they quickly spear the fish with their bill. They also eat insects, reptiles, small mammals, and even other birds. They're not picky!



■ YEAR-ROUND

HABITAT & RANGE

They live in freshwater and saltwater **habitats** all over the United States and Central America.

EGG



Average size =
2½ in. long

FUN FACT

Great Blue Herons have excellent night vision. This helps them hunt after dark.

KEE-EEEE-ARR!



SIZE

Length: 17 to 26 inches
Wingspan: 45 to 52 inches

RED-TAILED HAWK

Buteo jamaicensis

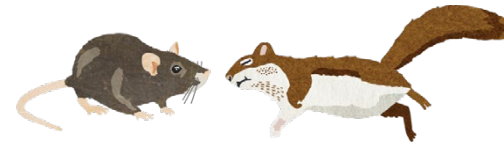
If you've ever seen a hawk out the window of a car, it is most likely you have spotted the Red-Tailed Hawk. One of the largest birds in the United States, you can sometimes catch them soaring in circles in the sky.

NEST

These large birds build themselves very large nests. Usually around 6½ feet wide, they are most often built at the tops of tall trees or on cliffs.

FOOD

Red-Tailed Hawks eat mostly mammals, such as rabbits, rats, and squirrels. You won't be able to lure these birds to your bird feeder.



■ YEAR-ROUND

HABITAT & RANGE

They live in open **habitats** throughout the United States and in many types of environments, as long as they have tall places to perch and some open land for hunting.

EGG



↗
Average
size =
2½ in. long

FUN FACT

Female Red-Tailed Hawks are larger than males. This is rare in the animal world.

GLOSSARY

aquatic Having to do with water.

breeding Producing offspring.

carrion The flesh of a dead animal.

crest A tuft of feathers that forms a point on the top of a bird's head.

crop A pouch that some birds have in their throat where they can store food.

flock A group of birds.

foliage A grouping of leaves, flowers, and branches.

forage To search for food.

habitat The environment or place where an animal naturally lives.

migrate The act of moving from one place to another. Birds usually migrate during the summer and winter months.

molting When feathers fall out and new ones grow.

nestling A young bird that still lives in the nest.

range Locations across the United States where you can spot birds during these phases: year-round, migration, breeding, and nonbreeding.

songbird A type of bird that is known for its musical singing.

suet A type of beef fat often used in bird food.

warbler A type of bird that is usually tiny and brightly colored.

woodland An area of land covered with trees.