**Themes and variations in birdsong.** Instinctively, we use the “theme and variations” approach as we learn to use songs to identify species. All songs of a given species fall into a recognizable pattern, the theme. Name your species, and then describe how you distinguish the songs of that species from the songs of others. For some species, such as an American redstart, it might be difficult to verbalize what we hear, but we nevertheless do hear a constant “theme,” some consistency in a pattern or tempo or quality that identifies the singing bird as a redstart. The variations can be endless, of course, and therein lies the challenge of identifying each singing individual to species!