

# **The Birds of Corhaven**

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To Micah. May your early, wide-eyed wonder at the outdoors grow to include birds one day. -e

Micah, you bring us more joy than a thousand warblers during spring migration. -k

# Preface

We were privileged to participate in the 2021 Coracle Fellowship cohort. This field guide is our final project, borne out of the love, care, and reflection stimulated by that community.

I came up with the idea for this field guide after encountering difficulties using a field guide as a novice birder. I wondered: What if field guides could be more localized? Kevin and I, being data scientists, discussed how to bring this idea to light. We collaborated on writing code to query [eBird.org](http://eBird.org), a “citizen science” website where birders can report their sightings and contribute to the overall understanding of birds. From eBird, we downloaded all recorded observations of birds within a 5 kilometer radius of Corhaven in Quicksburg, VA within the last 10 years. My code determined when each bird species tended to be observed in each season of the Christian liturgical calendar. Kevin’s code pulled all of that together into this book.

We contributed the structure, reflections, and code to create this guide, but we did not produce any of the bird descriptions or photos. All such content comes from various sources including Cornell University’s [eBird.org](http://eBird.org) and National Geographic. Birding, like Christianity, has a rich tradition built on contributions and perspectives from those who have gone before. While innovation can be useful, it must be informed by the good work that others have toiled to produce. -e



# Part 1: On birding

## Introduction

It is no stretch to say that birding saved our lives. In early 2020, we were struggling through a season of personal darkness, which was compounded by being shut off from much of the outside world due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We spent many days watching the passage of time from the our dining room window, unable to see beyond those circumstances in which we failed to flourish.

It was around spring that we first started to notice the appearance (and then reappearance) of different kinds of birds. What we had thought of as “birds” before became to us distinct creatures. Different species became associated with different personalities, colors, and sounds. We bought a field guide to help us identify them, which transformed them in our eyes. They were *named*, they were *known*, and because they evoked in us a hint of the joy one feels when we realize someone has become familiar, we saw that they were *good*.

The birds drew us outside of our home and ourselves. They called to us and gave us a reason to look and venture outwards. They gave structure to our days and weeks as we learned of their rhythms. Finally they became, to our surprise, reminders of God’s kindness and presence with us through the seasons. Like God, birds come in and out of our view, but they are always around.

The significance of birds has a rich heritage within Christian tradition. Besides being mentioned and playing critical symbolic roles within the Bible, they have been used as symbols in Christian art for centuries. There were numerous stories in the early days of the church of its saints and mystics befriending birds. More recently, the late John Stott was a lover of birds, writing *The Birds Our Teachers: Biblical Lessons from a Lifelong Bird Watcher*, which can be found in the Corhaven library. Birds need not be linked to explicit Biblical references to reveal their theological significance. One of my favorite books, *Great Possessions: An Amish Farmer's Journal* by David Kline, contains reflections about farm life. The birds that pass through his family's farm are central characters: The agents of a God who sustains his creatures out of creative abundance.

To anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear, we believe birding has much to offer us in our spiritual formation. It cultivates a sense of wonder and love of creation. It forms good habits and virtues in those who give themselves to the practice. It has the potential to draw humans into deeper communion with the living God, who rules over much more than the birds, but certainly not less. -k

## A note on Corhaven

Coracle is a living and breathing community of people knitted together by the Spirit and the humble work of its stewards. Its people are joined by a shared desire for deep spiritual communion, which transcends church traditions and localities. Despite its transcendent quality, Coracle is also tied intimately to a physical space. If you are reading this at Corhaven, you will be familiar with how the veil between God's space and ours seems to be just a little bit thinner there. I suspect that through common use, consecration, and cultivation of the grounds and buildings of Corhaven, it has been molded into a shape that is well-suited to revealing God's presence.

Taking a walk around Corhaven, you will likely notice the chickens and guinea fowl patrolling the grounds (they are not included in this field guide). Look above on a sunny day, and you may see Turkey Vultures circling overhead. Venture through Corhaven's paths into the woods and you will likely hear birds calling and singing (though they may be hard to spot). Like human communities, birds are tied to physical space and time. Specifically, most of them are tied to certain spaces at certain times – that is, they are seasonal. You can only really notice this if you try birding in the same place over time.

Quicksburg, VA is located close enough to migration pathways on the East coast to host a variety of birds.

In addition, its setting among farmland, forests, and the Appalachian Mountains make it a welcoming habitat. Closer to Corhaven itself, the lush woods and Holman's Creek at the back of the grounds offer plenty of hiding and feeding spots for birds. All these factors make Corhaven a challenging but potentially rewarding place for birding. -k

## Birding as virtue formation

When asked about my hobbies, I am likely to launch into a discourse of why I love birds and the practice of identifying them. Whether the person asking the question has any interest in what I have to say is questionable. What is unquestionable, though, is that my answers flow naturally out of me because the practice of birding has fundamentally shaped the kind of person I am.

Any practice, if embraced wholeheartedly over time, has the potential to shape its practitioners. In that respect, birding is not unique. With the exception of a lucky (or fanatical) minority, most of us partake in and are shaped by a diversity of practices. Human beings spend time birding, working, parenting, gardening, and so much more. Some of these practices form virtue in us, while others form vices (typically, each practice forms some combination of both). Most of this formation happens beneath the level of our conscious awareness, so it is worth reflecting from time to time on the kinds of people we are becoming as a result of our participation in a particular practice.

Birding is the first proper hobby I've discovered as an adult. It had been awhile since I felt driven to learn anything and everything I could about a new domain, which brought me back to my younger years when I would experience the rush of unearthing and navigating the intricacies of a new activity (the last one was when

I picked up rock climbing in college). I found that birding cultivated my capacity for childlike *awe* and *joy*. It taught me once again to be excited rather than cynical or skeptical towards something out in the world. It taught me that there is much in the world that is worth knowing.

While birding evokes childlike wonder, it simultaneously cultivates more adult virtues like *conscientiousness* and *care*. It is certainly possible to identify and catalog birds in a mostly self-serving manner (e.g. to run up one's tally of observations), but even that relies on the generosity and care of others who make birding information and knowledge readily available. Birding is a shared practice and draws you into a community, and to be initiated into this community is to care about the effect one has on other birders, the environment, and of course, the birds. Because one can only begin birding in light of the generosity of others, the practice invites you to give to and care for others in turn.

Because I am newer to birding and lack years of hard-earned knowledge that would allow identifying birds to come “naturally”, I have had to acquire the basics of birding through intentional *discipline*, via repetition and practice. I read up on common species to look out for in new birding locations I visit. I track recent observations from birding websites (and a web-app Evelyn and I built) to decide where to go birding. I hone my bird photography skills through trial and error. I study my field guide to memorize subtle cues to

help with identification. As with all virtues, the point of intentional disciplines is to make a certain way of being “second nature”. There will come a day when all this comes naturally, but it will likely take years of treating birding as an intentional discipline.

Finally, birding cultivates my ability to *love*. Birding assumes there are things outside of myself worth contemplating, and as I come to know them, I discover that they are not mere objects, but subjects with their own exterior and (I assume) interior lives. Love, the great theologians have argued, is a form of knowing. One cannot truly know something without loving it, and one cannot love something without truly knowing it. The surest way to learn to love birds is to know them, but you cannot truly know them without loving them. Birding cultivates a million different virtues, but the greatest of these is love. -k

## Birding as part of the spiritual life

At its core, birding is a practice by which we come to know birds as subjects and creatures. As subjects, birds are distinct from us. This may seem a trivial truth, but in a world that elevates self and autonomy, it is no small thing to be reminded that there are beings beyond ourselves with dynamic lives of their own. As creatures, birds are simultaneously part of the created order and distinct from each other. Thus, they reveal the world's (literal and figurative) diversity and color, which makes them worth knowing.

What is the goal of the spiritual life if not to become better subjects and creatures within the created order and in relation to God our Creator? Our capacity to receive the practice of birding as a gift, if we embrace it, parallels and enhances our capacity to receive spiritual life.

Birds are warm-blooded animals constituting the class *Aves* (Latin for ‘bird’). There are nearly 11,000 species of bird worldwide, and they all share many genetic, biological, and physiological characteristics. These are related in fascinating ways, but it would be a mistake to think birds are reducible to these physical characteristics alone. It is of course possible to view birds as mere configurations of physical characteristics, but all birders (and ornithologists) are drawn to them for their beauty and distinct personalities.

Similarly, it is possible to view the world only as a complex system of physical, economic, and social forces. That is to view the world as *nature*, i.e. as mere matter. Those forces are certainly at play, but any Christian living the spiritual life knows how impoverished such a view is. The world is not mere nature, but *creation* charged with the presence of a Creator God who continues creating and interacting with the world. Although birding is about noticing what is there, it beckons us to see not just the birds, but beyond the birds themselves.

One of my favorite aspects of birding is the seasonality of various birds. They come and go in predictable patterns. Many species of waterfowl show up near our home in Virginia in the winter. Songbirds show up in the spring. Birding invites us to stay and patiently await old friends, and gives us a sense of the passing of time.

The importance of time to the spiritual life should not surprise mature Christians. God brings Christians through different seasons of life. Every year, the Christian calendar draws us into the unfolding drama of God's people as we walk through Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time. Each season has its place in time and in the spiritual life, and it is sacrilegious to skip any one season to rush towards another. God appears to teach us different things in and through different seasons, and to expect otherwise would be as foolish as looking for warblers (seasonal migrants) in the middle of winter.

Finally, birding forces us to acknowledge that we are ultimately recipients of a gift. We can, and indeed should, prepare and plan as best we can for any birding expedition. Learning the behaviors, habitats, and seasonality of different species will increase one's likelihood of encountering birds of interest. Having the right equipment and technique helps, too. But ultimately, nothing is guaranteed or owed to us. The birds will do as they please, and if they deign to appear, it should be received as grace.

So too with the spiritual life. We worship, pray, and study so that we might become more attuned to God's whispers and presence. God is always speaking and present, but our limitations as creatures mean we should always be listening and watching as if God could appear as a bird in a bush. "*The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes*" (John 3:8). Likewise, the birds fly where they will, and you may hear their song, but you do not know where they come from or where they go. -k

## A note on the guide

Creating a comprehensive hyper-localized bird guide is a Sisyphean task: As soon as a new version is ready, there will be weather systems, climate change, or other environmental factors that influence the birds you may see in that area. You may not see the birds you expect to see, and you may even see birds you did not expect to see. Therefore, this guide was not designed to be authoritative. This guide contains birds that have either been personally observed by us in the Corhaven area or that others have reported observing on [eBird.org](http://eBird.org). Your own mileage may vary.

The more time we have spent as birders, the more we have associated different species with different times. As we see different birds come and go during the year, we are reminded of the passage of time and the rhythms of God's creation. We wanted to provide a resource that might help readers draw links between different birds and the seasons of the Church. This was easy enough, since the Church organizes time with the liturgical calendar. Our innovation in this guide is that we have organized entries for birds by the Christian liturgical season(s) in which they are most commonly observed.

We have included the liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time. While some Christian traditions may differ in the number and timing of liturgical seasons, we felt these

were a reasonable, ecumenical representation of the Christian calendar. Note that single-day events such as Pentecost and Ascension are not included due to the difficulty of gathering sufficient bird data for a single day. Additionally, we have split Ordinary Time into *early* and *late* portions, because it is the longest season, and the common birds do vary between those halves of the season.

We hope that organizing the guide in this way will help you connect the birds you observe to particular liturgical seasons. May the birds you see be friendly reminders of God's activity in the time and place you find yourself, and may they nudge you towards deeper wonder and awe for the one who created both the birds and the seasons. -e

## Part 2: Field guide

## Advent

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A time of waiting, yearning, and reflecting. Advent comes in late November or early December to mark the start of the Christian calendar. As we wait patiently for God's renewal, we call out: O come and make all things new. O come, o come, Emmanuel.

Very few bird species are common around Corhaven during Advent. Most have migrated south to warmer climates for the winter. Of the birds that you might see, most will have muted colors reflecting the winter environment around them (but keep an eye out for a flash of color from the occasional Green-winged Teal). Even though most birds you may see in Advent are not very colorful, they tend to be relatively large, making them easy to spot. You will likely see some members of the duck, geese, and swan family floating on calmer waters or flying overhead. You may even hear the ducks making typical duck sounds. -e

## Anatidae: Swans, Geese & Ducks

### American Black Duck



A large duck, nearly identical to Mallard in size and shape but with a much darker chocolate-colored body. Bill is yellow with a slight greenish tinge on males, dull grayish-green on females. Note blue wing patch lacks any white borders. Fairly common in northeastern North America, especially along the coast. Large flocks can gather in the winter in saltmarshes and estuaries, but also occurs in smaller numbers on ponds and lakes, often mixed with other duck species. Frequently hybridizes with Mallard. Hybrids usually look darker than typical Mallards and may have an intermediate head pattern; also look for white in the tail or curled feathers above the tail to indicate Mallard genes.

## Green-winged Teal



Tiny duck with a petite, thin bill. Males have a brown head with a wide green swatch behind the eye, creamy speckled breast, and mostly gray body. Females are brown, darker overall than other dabbling ducks. Forages by dabbling and tipping-up to reach submerged aquatic vegetation. Also regularly walks around mudflats to feed.

### Ring-necked Duck



A relatively small diving duck with a tall peaked crown. Males are handsome with glossy black head and back, clean gray sides, and a brighter white spur on the side. Females are grayish-brown, often with a paler patch at the base of the bill and a white eyering. Both sexes have a white band near the tip of gray bill. Also note gray, not white, wingstripe in flight. Usually favors small bodies of water, such as beaver ponds and cattail marshes, but also occurs on larger lakes, rivers, and bays. Can be found in mixed flocks with other diving ducks, although usually in smaller numbers than scaup. Compare with both species of scaup and Redhead (especially females).

## Icteridae: Blackbirds, Meadowlarks & Orioles

### Brown-headed Cowbird



Stout bill. Short tail and stocky body. Males are glossy black with chocolate brown head. Females are gray-brown overall, without bold streaks, but slightly paler throat. Juveniles streaked brown. Found in open woods, farmland, and stockyards. Forages by walking on the ground. Often in flocks with other blackbirds in winter. Visits feeders. Unpopular due to their parasitic habit of laying eggs in nests of other birds.

## Motacillidae: Pipits

### American Pipit



Slender and drab songbird of open country. Usually grayish above and streaked below, but some lack streaks in breeding season. Distinguished from similar-looking (unrelated) sparrows by thin bill and lanky appearance with long legs. Walks on the ground with jerky motions and frequently bobs tail. Flocks are often heard as they pass overhead or flush from a barren field; listen for sharp, high-pitched call notes and look for flashing white outer tail feathers. Song, given from a perch or in flight, is an often impressively lengthy series of repetitive, high-pitched notes.

## Sturnidae: Starlings

### European Starling



Stocky and dark overall. Short tail, triangular wings, and long, pointed bill. Close look reveals beautiful plumage. In breeding season, shows purple and green iridescence on body with yellow bill. In winter, bold white spots cover the entire body. Native to Eurasia; introduced in many regions worldwide, where it is now abundant. Often in large flocks. Makes variety of squeaky vocalizations, including proficient mimicry of other species. Inhabits a wide range of open habitats, often in very close proximity to people. Visits feeders, and is often aggressive.

## Christmas

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Representing the time between December 25 and January 5 (the day before Epiphany), Christmas focuses us on the gift of the Incarnation, which is God's definitive pronouncement that creation is good and expresses God's nature as one who gives good gifts.

Perhaps to highlight the gift-nature of the season, few birds are common around Corhaven at Christmas. Thus, each one you see should be regarded as a rare gift. -k

## Anatidae: Swans, Geese & Ducks

### American Black Duck



A large duck, nearly identical to Mallard in size and shape but with a much darker chocolate-colored body. Bill is yellow with a slight greenish tinge on males, dull grayish-green on females. Note blue wing patch lacks any white borders. Fairly common in northeastern North America, especially along the coast. Large flocks can gather in the winter in saltmarshes and estuaries, but also occurs in smaller numbers on ponds and lakes, often mixed with other duck species. Frequently hybridizes with Mallard. Hybrids usually look darker than typical Mallards and may have an intermediate head pattern; also look for white in the tail or curled feathers above the tail to indicate Mallard genes.

## Green-winged Teal



Tiny duck with a petite, thin bill. Males have a brown head with a wide green swatch behind the eye, creamy speckled breast, and mostly gray body. Females are brown, darker overall than other dabbling ducks. Forages by dabbling and tipping-up to reach submerged aquatic vegetation. Also regularly walks around mudflats to feed.

## Motacillidae: Pipits

### American Pipit



Slender and drab songbird of open country. Usually grayish above and streaked below, but some lack streaks in breeding season. Distinguished from similar-looking (unrelated) sparrows by thin bill and lanky appearance with long legs. Walks on the ground with jerky motions and frequently bobs tail. Flocks are often heard as they pass overhead or flush from a barren field; listen for sharp, high-pitched call notes and look for flashing white outer tail feathers. Song, given from a perch or in flight, is an often impressively lengthy series of repetitive, high-pitched notes.

## Epiphany

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Starting on January 6 and extending until Lent, Epiphany celebrates the manifestation of Jesus to the world. It is a time for the world to recognize and receive its rightful King, if only it knows where to look. How fitting that it coincides with the end of winter, when those who look carefully can see the first hints of new life returning to Virginia.

Quite a few different bird families are common around Corhaven during Epiphany, including some hawks; swans, geese, and ducks; and sparrows. When there is snow on the ground, keep an eye on any low-to-mid height bushes as a place where the smaller birds congregate - especially if it is a berry bush! On particularly sunny days, you may see the typically skittish sparrows linger in the warm rays of sunlight. Keep an eye on dead, open tree branches or in the open sky to see hawks. -e

## Accipitridae: Kites, Hawks & Eagles

### Red-shouldered Hawk



Smaller than Red-tailed Hawk. Adults are beautiful with rich orange barring below and bold black-and-white checkerboard patterning on wings. Often in forested areas, where they hunt from perches. Perches on wires more frequently than Red-tailed Hawk. In flight, wings seem narrow and pushed forward compared to Red-tailed or Broad-winged Hawk; also note relatively long tail. Population in California is more richly colored (darker orange) than paler Eastern birds; while Florida birds are paler with gray head and back.

**Red-tailed Hawk**

Most common roadside raptor across much of North America. Often perches atop telephone poles, light posts, and edges of trees. Incredible variation in plumages, including less common dark morphs and various regional differences. Eastern adults have brilliant reddish-orange tail and pale underparts with obvious band of dark marks across belly. Western birds are typically darker. Immatures do not have a red tail.

## Alaudidae: Larks

### Horned Lark



Squat-looking bird with short legs and low-profile body. Adults are mostly sandy-brown with white belly, sometimes with blurry streaks on sides of breast. Look for bold head pattern, especially black mask and chest band. Throat color varies from yellow to white.

Namesake horns on head are sometimes visible at close range. Juveniles can be confusing; they are messy-looking, grayish-brown with bold white spots and scallops on the upperparts. Note bill shape to help separate from sparrows or longspurs. Widespread in open habitats throughout the Northern Hemisphere. Typically seen in flocks, sometimes mixed in with other open-ground songbirds, running along the ground in open areas with little to no vegetation. Listen for lovely jumbled song, as well as variable high-pitched calls when flying over.

## Anatidae: Swans, Geese & Ducks

### Canada Goose



A large brown goose with a black neck and white chinstrap. Overall size, bill size, and brown coloration variable across subspecies. Occurs in any open or wetland habitat, from city parks and golf courses to pristine marshes and Arctic tundra. Typically in flocks or family groups. Often seen in mixed flocks with Cackling Goose, especially in central and western North America. Canada Goose is almost always larger, longer-necked, and longer-billed than Cackling, although beware there is some overlap between the smallest Canada and largest Cackling. Abundant and widespread throughout the U.S. and Canada; rare in Mexico. Introduced and widely established in Europe. Listen for loud honking calls, especially as flocks migrate overhead in the classic V formation.

**Common Merganser**

Large duck with a sleek body and thin red bill. Breeding males have a dark green head and mostly white body with peachy blush on underparts. Females and immature males have rusty brown head and gray bodies with a cleanly demarcated white throat. Feeds in rivers, lakes, and large ponds by diving to catch fish. Hardy in winter, often staying as far north as open water permits.

### Hooded Merganser



Small diving duck with thin serrated bill. Breeding males have showy black-and-white crest, a couple zebra stripes on the white breast, and cinnamon-colored sides. Females are brown with a puffy crest and partly yellow bill. Looks slender and long-necked in flight, with very fast wingbeats. Widespread across much of North America, but usually only seen in pairs or small flocks. Nests in cavities near small ponds or marshes; especially fond of wooded swamps. In winter, usually found on calm bodies of water; almost never on the ocean. Sometimes mixes loosely with other duck species.

## Columbidae: Pigeons and Doves

### Rock Pigeon



Fairly large pigeon with wild and feral populations throughout the world. True wild birds nest on cliffs and in caves from western Europe to central Asia. Pale gray overall with two bold black wingbars and iridescent purple and green on neck. Feral varieties are common in cities and farmland, often in large flocks. Variable plumage: some identical to wild-type birds, but can be completely black, white, or orangey-brown and any combination in between.

## Icteridae: Blackbirds, Meadowlarks & Orioles

### Common Grackle



Lanky, fierce-looking, glossy blackbird. A bit larger than a jay; smaller, proportionally longer-tailed and shorter-winged than a crow. Staring yellow eye and long heavy bill (compared to Red-winged Blackbird). Often in flocks with other blackbirds in winter. Forages in fields, scrubby areas, and open woods. Visits feeders.

## Passerellidae: New World Sparrows and Towhees

### Dark-eyed Junco



Unique sparrow with incredible variation between populations. Generally patterned with gray, white, and shades of tan. All have pinkish bills and white outer tail feathers. Juveniles are streaky. Breeds in a variety of forested habitats, especially with conifers. Found in any wooded habitat in the winter, often in flocks. Usually forages on the ground for seeds, but also fond of brushy thickets or weedy fields. Visits feeders. Subspecies include: Slate-colored (widespread), Oregon (West), Pink-sided (Rockies), Gray-headed (Rockies and southwest U.S. to Mexico), Red-backed (central Arizona and New Mexico), and White-winged (breeds in Black Hills, winters mainly Colorado).

### White-crowned Sparrow



Large, long-tailed sparrow with striking head pattern. Adults have black and white stripes on the head, while immatures show brown and tan. Underparts are plain grayish without streaks. Bill color varies from yellow to pink, but always brighter than White-throated Sparrow. Breeds in brushy areas or thickets in open forest, often with conifers. In migration and winter, can be found in any brushy or weedy areas, often hopping on the ground. Visits feeders.

## White-throated Sparrow



Large, long-tailed sparrow. Usually shows a bold head pattern and contrasting white throat. Two morphs with different head colors: white-striped and tan-striped. Both morphs show a yellow patch in front of the eye, but it is more obvious on white-striped birds. Adults have a fairly plain gray-brown breast without bold streaks, but immatures can be quite streaky. Note the grayish bill, unlike White-crowned Sparrow. Breeds in coniferous or mixed forests, often near clearings. In migration and winter, can be found in woods, forest edge, thickets and shrubby fields. Whistled song often transcribed as “Old Sam Peabody” or “O Sweet Canada.” Visits feeders.

## Lent

Lent starts in February or March, and is a time for contemplation and self-denial. Spring is at hand, but it is not yet time to celebrate. That comes later, only after taking up our cross and following Jesus, the Man of Sorrows.

Likewise, it is too early to welcome the full range of migrating birds. Some new birds will start appearing, but many of them are draped in the dull plumage of their winter counterparts, demanding discipline to identify. -k

## Accipitridae: Kites, Hawks & Eagles

### Red-tailed Hawk



Most common roadside raptor across much of North America. Often perches atop telephone poles, light posts, and edges of trees. Incredible variation in plumages, including less common dark morphs and various regional differences. Eastern adults have brilliant reddish-orange tail and pale underparts with obvious band of dark marks across belly. Western birds are typically darker. Immatures do not have a red tail.

## Anatidae: Swans, Geese & Ducks

### American Wigeon



Breeding males have obvious white blaze on forehead and broad green slash behind eye. Females are plainer brown with rusty sides. Females are very difficult to distinguish from female Eurasian Wigeon; note colder grayish-brown head on American that contrasts with warmer orangey sides. Also look for brighter white, not gray, underwings in flight, but this can be difficult to judge, especially at a distance. Widespread and common in North America, occasionally wintering as far south as northern South America. Typically in flocks on lakes and wetlands, often grazing in nearby fields. Regular vagrant to Europe.

## Blue-winged Teal



Small duck with chalky-blue patches on the upperwing (visible in flight). Breeding males unmistakable with bold white crescent in front of eye and polka-dotted sides. Females are cold brown overall and intricately patterned. Look for a hint of a pale crescent on the face, as well as a dark eyeline and pale eye-arcs.

Usually found in shallow wetlands or marshes, where it can occur in pairs or flocks, sometimes mixed with other species of ducks. Compare with other teal species: female Cinnamon Teal is warmer-toned overall and has a duller face pattern, while female Green-winged Teal is more compact, darker, and has a different wing pattern in flight.

**Canvasback**

Attractive duck with distinctive triangular head; forehead slopes seamlessly into the long bill. Males are white-bodied with black chest, reddish-brown head, and red eye. Females are dull grayish-brown with unique head profile and dark brown eye. Breeds in lakes and marshes. Winters in any large body of water with submerged aquatic vegetation on which to feed. Dives frequently, searching for vegetation and invertebrates. Often gathers in large flocks in nonbreeding season.

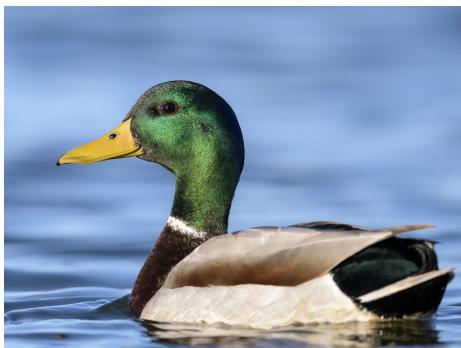
**Gadwall**

Fairly large duck with extensive range across Northern Hemisphere. Males are mostly gray with a black rear end and puffy head. Also look for small white wing patch in flight. Females are similar to Mallard, but note thinner bill, plainer face, orange line along the edge of the bill, and white wing patch in flight. Typically found in pairs or small flocks in shallow wetlands, ponds, or bays, sometimes mixed with other species of ducks.

### Hooded Merganser



Small diving duck with thin serrated bill. Breeding males have showy black-and-white crest, a couple zebra stripes on the white breast, and cinnamon-colored sides. Females are brown with a puffy crest and partly yellow bill. Looks slender and long-necked in flight, with very fast wingbeats. Widespread across much of North America, but usually only seen in pairs or small flocks. Nests in cavities near small ponds or marshes; especially fond of wooded swamps. In winter, usually found on calm bodies of water; almost never on the ocean. Sometimes mixes loosely with other duck species.

**Mallard**

A large duck, generally common and familiar within its extensive range. Males are distinctive with iridescent green head, yellow bill, chestnut breast, and gray body. Females are mottled brown with orange and black splotches on the bill. Found anywhere with water, including city parks, backyard creeks, and various wetland habitats. Often in flocks, and frequently mixes with other duck species. In North America, females can be tricky to distinguish from American Black Duck, Mottled Duck, and Mexican Duck where ranges overlap. Those species are all darker-bodied than Mallard. A good view of the wing can be helpful, too: white wingbars on the leading and trailing edges of the blue wing patch are bolder on Mallard. Frequently hybridizes with those species, which can be even more confusing. Any bird with extensive white in the tail or curled feathers above the tail has some Mallard genes.

**Northern Shoveler**

Medium-sized duck; smaller than a Mallard. Huge, spoon-shaped bill visible at a distance and in flight. Breeding males have dark green head, white breast, and chestnut sides and belly. Females buffy-brown with large, distinctive bill. Chalky-blue upperwing. Forages by sifting through the water, often swimming in spirals in groups.

## Tundra Swan



Huge white bird with a long elegant neck. North American “Whistling” Tundras have a mostly black bill, with a yellow spot near the eye; Eurasian “Bewick’s” have a more evenly divided black-and-yellow bill. Immatures dusky gray-brown with pink on bill. Easily confused with Whooper and Trumpeter Swans where their ranges overlap; see those species’ accounts. Breeds on ponds and tundra in far north. Winters in large flocks on fresh or saltwater. Forages in shallow, vegetated wetlands, reaching under the water for plants, and walks through corn stubble. Gives loud echoing bugles, often while in flight.

## Wood Duck



Breeding males are stunning with ornate, colorful patterns visible up close; appears dark overall at a distance. Females gray-brown with thin white eyering. Crest on head. Found in wetlands and flooded woods. Flies through trees with exceptional maneuverability, thanks to its long tail. Often shy and quick to flush. Call is a loud, screeching whistle.

## Corvidae: Jays, Crows & Magpies

### Common Raven



Large, glossy-black bird with a wedge-shaped tail.

Larger than a crow with a longer, thicker bill.

Distinctive shape in flight, with rather long, swept-back wings and long tail. Note smoother, steadier wingbeats compared with faster, choppier wingbeats of crows.

Extensive range throughout the Northern Hemisphere.

Found in a wide variety of habitats, including desert, coniferous forest, coastlines, sagebrush, tundra, and grasslands. Often solitary or in pairs, but can gather in small groups. Typical call is a loud, guttural croak, but makes an astonishing variety of other strange noises.

Compare with Chihuahuan Raven in the southwestern U.S. and Mexico, and with various large, all-dark crows and ravens in Europe and Asia.

## Laridae: Gulls, Terns & Skimmers

### Ring-billed Gull



Fairly small gull, common and widespread throughout most of North America. Breeding adults are white-headed with a bold black ring around the bill; nonbreeding adults have smudgy brown markings on the head. Note pale eye and yellow legs. Immatures are mottled brownish overall; note pink bill with black tip. Found along lakes, rivers, ponds, and beaches. More common inland than most other gull species, and quite fond of parking lots and urban areas. Often in flocks. Most similar to Mew Gull, but larger and larger-billed. Immatures of the two species are especially difficult to differentiate, but Ring-billed is usually more coarsely mottled.

## Passerellidae: New World Sparrows and Towhees

### Dark-eyed Junco



Unique sparrow with incredible variation between populations. Generally patterned with gray, white, and shades of tan. All have pinkish bills and white outer tail feathers. Juveniles are streaky. Breeds in a variety of forested habitats, especially with conifers. Found in any wooded habitat in the winter, often in flocks. Usually forages on the ground for seeds, but also fond of brushy thickets or weedy fields. Visits feeders. Subspecies include: Slate-colored (widespread), Oregon (West), Pink-sided (Rockies), Gray-headed (Rockies and southwest U.S. to Mexico), Red-backed (central Arizona and New Mexico), and White-winged (breeds in Black Hills, winters mainly Colorado).

## Savannah Sparrow



A medium-sized, short-tailed sparrow. Extensive plumage variation across range, but always streaky. Usually shows distinctive yellow patch in front of eye, but this can be indistinct or absent on some individuals. Some populations in California and Baja have larger bills and more muted gray streaking; others are very dark and boldly streaked. “Ipswich” Sparrow on the Atlantic Coast is paler with unique buffy-pinkish tones. Almost always found in open areas, from meadows and hayfields to tundra and coastal dunes. Tends to be found in more open habitats than Song Sparrow; also smaller and shorter-tailed.

## White-throated Sparrow



Large, long-tailed sparrow. Usually shows a bold head pattern and contrasting white throat. Two morphs with different head colors: white-striped and tan-striped. Both morphs show a yellow patch in front of the eye, but it is more obvious on white-striped birds. Adults have a fairly plain gray-brown breast without bold streaks, but immatures can be quite streaky. Note the grayish bill, unlike White-crowned Sparrow. Breeds in coniferous or mixed forests, often near clearings. In migration and winter, can be found in woods, forest edge, thickets and shrubby fields. Whistled song often transcribed as “Old Sam Peabody” or “O Sweet Canada.” Visits feeders.

## Regulidae: Kinglets

### Golden-crowned Kinglet



Tiny, hyperactive songbird usually found in conifer trees. Look for black stripes on the head and bold wing pattern. The namesake golden crown is usually just a small stripe, but can be flared into an expressive fiery-orange crest when agitated. Breeds in coniferous forests, usually staying high in trees. In migration and winter, often joins mixed flocks of other songbirds in a wider variety of wooded habitats. Very active; often hovers and flicks wings as it forages. Listen for extremely high-pitched call notes.

## Scolopacidae: Sandpipers

### Wilson's Snipe



Plump, well-camouflaged shorebird that blends into wet meadows and marshes. Dark and heavily marked, with pale buffy stripes on back and face. Extremely long bill used to probe into mud for invertebrates. Similar in shape to American Woodcock but much darker with extensive markings on underparts. Fairly common and widespread throughout North America, wintering to northern South America. Found in muddy wetlands, flooded fields, and marshes, usually singly but sometimes gathering in loose groups. When flushed, listen for rough call note. On breeding grounds, watch and listen for aerial flight display, given day and night: a rapid series of hoot-like noises produced by the outer tail feathers in flight.

## Turdidae: Thrushes

### American Robin



Fairly large songbird with round body, long legs, and longish tail. Gray above with warm orange underparts and blackish head. Hops across lawns and stands erect with its bill often tilted upward. In fall and winter, forms large flocks and gathers in trees to roost or eat berries. Common across North America in gardens, parks, yards, golf courses, fields, pastures, and many other wooded habitats.

## Easter

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Easter, starting in March or April, is the time we have been waiting for all year. Jesus is alive! The Resurrection declares that Jesus is the world's rightful King. Death no longer has the final say, and God has turned creation right side up.

The earth reflects this reality, too, as the full bloom of spring arrives to defeat the cold of winter. You may see the snow start to melt and hydrate the earth. You may see trees and early spring flowers start to bud and bloom. Easter season also includes the peak of spring migration, welcoming a diverse number of species to Corhaven. Many of these birds are decked out in colorful plumage, as if wearing their best clothing to celebrate Easter. -e

## Anatidae: Swans, Geese & Ducks

### Ruddy Duck



Small, compact duck with a long, fan-shaped tail, often held sticking up out of water. Breeding males have a chestnut body, black cap, white cheek, and baby-blue bill. Winter males have a brown body, black cap and white cheek. Females and immature males are brown overall with a dark cap and dark line through the cheek. Often in tight groups bobbing like corks on ponds and bays. Dives to forage on aquatic invertebrates. Not often seen flying.

## Cardinalidae: Tanagers, Cardinals, Grosbeaks & Dickcissels

### Scarlet Tanager



Breeding males are unmistakable: brilliant red with black wings and tail. Females and nonbreeding males are dull yellow-olive with dark wings (blacker on males, grayer on females). Compare with female Summer Tanager, which has a longer bill and less contrast between wing and body color. Breeds in mature deciduous forests, usually staying high in the canopy. Migrants are also usually found in mature woodlands. Winters in northern South America. Occasionally visits feeders in the spring, especially after periods of rain or cold weather. Listen for burry song, like an American Robin with a sore throat.

## Charadriidae: Plovers

### Semipalmated Plover



Small, orange-legged plover with solid dark breast band. Medium-brown upperparts are the color of wet sand, noticeably darker than Piping or Snowy Plovers. Look for short, blunt bill with orange base (often indistinct on juveniles). Feeds on mudflats and beaches, often mixed with other shorebirds. Even when in a flock, individuals are typically spread out rather than remaining a tight unit. Breeds on the tundra or rocky beaches at northern latitudes; winters to southern South America. Migrants are common and widespread, inland and coastal. Listen for distinctive two parted “chu-weep!” calls, and assorted chortles and chuckles.

## Icteridae: Blackbirds, Meadowlarks & Orioles

### Baltimore Oriole



The common oriole in the eastern U.S., wintering to northern South America. Adult males are stunning: bright orange with a black head and bold white wingbar. Females vary from yellowish to bright orange below, often with blotchy black on the head. Breeds in deciduous trees in open woodlands, forest edges, orchards, riversides, parks, and backyards. Listen for rich whistled song. Visits feeders with nectar and fruits. Females can be very difficult to distinguish from Bullock's Oriole, and hybrids do occur. Baltimore is usually brightest on the breast, not the face.

## Parulidae: Wood Warblers

### American Redstart



Adult males are striking and distinctive: mostly glossy black with bright orange flashes on the wings, tail, and sides. Females and young males are duller gray and olive with yellow patches instead of orange. Habitually flicks and fans tail while foraging for insects. Breeds in mature deciduous forests, often near water. Migrants can be found in any wooded habitat. Fairly extensive winter range throughout most of Middle America, the Caribbean, and northern South America. Song is extremely variable.

### Black-throated Green Warbler



Bright yellow face with olive cheeks, crown, and back. Only breeding males have solid black throat. In all plumages, look for dark streaks on white flanks and yellow wash on vent. Breeds in mixed coniferous forests; migrants can be found in any wooded habitat, usually with tall trees. Winters primarily in Central America and the Caribbean, rarely into northern South America. Compare especially with Townsend's Warbler on the wintering grounds, but Black-throated Green has a less contrasting face pattern (especially paler crown and cheeks) and less yellow on breast.

**Northern Parula**

Small, short-tailed warbler with a sharply pointed, bicolored bill. Blue-gray above with mossy-green patch on the back, white eye-arcs, and yellow breast. Adult males have most extensive black and rufous breast band; young females are plain yellow. Breeds in mature coniferous or deciduous forests, especially near water. Builds nest with moss; especially fond of Spanish moss in the southeast U.S. and old-man's-beard in the Northeast. Found in any wooded habitat in migration. Winters primary in the Caribbean and eastern Mexico. Loud song is a buzzy, ascending trill with sharp chip at the end; sounds like a zipper. Compare with Tropical Parula, which always has a clean yellow or orange breast and lacks white eye-arcs.

**Ovenbird**

Secretive warbler that lacks vibrant colors, but compensates with an enormous voice. Olive-brown above with black streaks on white breast and bold white eyering. Orange central crown stripe bordered by black on either side. Forages for insects by walking along branches and on the ground with exaggerated footsteps and bobbing gait. Breeds primarily in areas with extensive deciduous or mixed forest. Winters primarily in Middle America and the Caribbean, where it can be quiet and difficult to detect. On the breeding grounds, listen for its loud song that builds in volume: “tea-cher, TEA-cher, TEA-CHER!”; also gives a sharp, high-pitched, metallic chip year-round. Possible to confuse with thrushes, but smaller, and walks instead of hops.

### Pine Warbler



A medium-sized, rather robust and long-tailed warbler, with a noticeably stout bill. Variable plumage, from bright adult males with extensive yellow throat to extremely dull grayish-brown immature females.

Always look for two white wingbars, diffuse streaking on the sides of the breast, large bill, and long narrow tail with a shallow notch. Well-named: almost always found in pine trees throughout the year. In spring and summer, listen for loud musical trill (compare with Chipping Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco). Occasionally visits feeders, especially for suet. A short-distance migrant, wintering entirely in the United States.

**Prairie Warbler**

Small warbler, yellow overall with black streaks on sides and unique face pattern. Upperparts are duller olive. Reddish streaks on back are distinctive, but can be difficult to see or absent on immatures. Long tail is often pumped up and down, but not as consistently as Palm Warbler. Forages for insects in a range of shrubby habitats, from cedar-studded fields to regenerating woods to mangroves in Florida. Winters in Florida and the Caribbean.

## Worm-eating Warbler



A plain warbler dressed in subtle shades of olive, brown, and buff. Note black and tan stripes on head and long, sharp bill. Pinkish legs. Skulky, often seen in the understory, probing clumps of dead leaves in search of insects. Breeds in mature deciduous forests, especially on steep dry slopes. Winters primarily in Middle America and the Caribbean, where it can be found in a wider variety of forested habitats. Listen for its dry, insectlike trill that is very similar to Chipping Sparrow. Appearance most similar to Swainson's Warbler; distinguished by head pattern (Swainson's has a rufous crown, Worm-eating has a striped head) and habits (Swainson's usually found on the ground, Worm-eating in low understory).

## Passerellidae: New World Sparrows and Towhees

### Eastern Towhee



Large, striking, long-tailed sparrow of the eastern U.S. and Canada. Black above with bright rufous sides and a white belly. Eye color varies from white (in the southeastern U.S) to dark red (further north). In flight, note white corners on tail. Also note females are browner than jet-black males. Most similar to Spotted Towhee, but Eastern is mostly black above, only showing single white patch on folded wing. Hybridizes with Spotted Towhee in central U.S. and south-central Canada; hybrids usually show intermediate wing pattern. Inhabits scrubby areas and forest edges with thickets. Forages primarily by hopping along ground, scraping away leaf litter. Males sing from atop shrubs and low trees. Visits feeders.

## Scolopacidae: Sandpipers

### Greater Yellowlegs



Fairly large shorebird with bright yellow legs. Plumage is essentially identical to Lesser Yellowlegs: gray upperparts with white speckling, streaky neck, and white belly. Proportions are most important for identification. Greater is larger overall with longer, thicker, more upturned bill, longer neck, blockier head, and bigger chest. Forages actively on mudflats and in shallow pools and marshes, often in loose mixed flocks with Lesser Yellowlegs. Somewhat more likely to be found in larger, more open habitats than Lesser, but much overlap. Listen for strong, ringing “tew tew tew!” calls, louder than Lesser, and usually three or four notes instead of one or two (though Greater can also give single notes).

## Least Sandpiper



Tiny brownish sandpiper. Most easily distinguished from other small sandpipers by darker, more brownish coloration. Juveniles are particularly bright with rusty tones on the upperparts. Also note fine-tipped bill and yellowish legs, but beware legs can be covered with dark mud and other peeps (like Semipalmated Sandpiper) can rarely show slightly greenish legs. Habitat and behavior are helpful supporting clues. Typically forages in a crouched posture, picking for invertebrates in the mud. Often in small loose groups, but not in large, tight flocks like Semipalmated or Western Sandpipers. Prefers drier mud, often on the higher edges of mudflats or small patches of water in marshes. Widespread and common, especially inland. Breeds in various wetland habitats throughout Alaska and Canada. Winters from the southern U.S. to South America. Listen for high-pitched, rolling “greeep!” calls.

## Lesser Yellowlegs



Medium-sized shorebird with bright yellow legs. Plumage is essentially identical to Greater Yellowlegs: gray upperparts with white speckling, streaky neck, and white belly. Proportions are most important for identification. Lesser is smaller overall with shorter, narrower, straighter bill, shorter neck, more rounded head, and smaller chest. Forages actively on mudflats and in shallow pools and marshes, often in loose mixed flocks with Greater Yellowlegs. Somewhat more likely to be found in smaller, marshier habitats than Greater, but much overlap. Listen for soft, whistled “tew” calls, typically only one or two notes, unlike the stronger series of notes from Greater.

## Solitary Sandpiper



Medium-sized shorebird. Gray above and white below, with fine white speckling on wings and bold white spectacles. Note dark underwing and dark rump in flight. Smaller and shorter-legged than Lesser Yellowlegs, with duller greenish legs. Often alone, but multiple individuals may gather loosely in appropriate habitat. Tips body like Spotted Sandpiper, but less constantly and not as quick and dramatic. Breeds around ponds and marshes in the boreal forest; uses old songbird nests in trees, unlike most other shorebirds. In migration and winter, mostly seen on small bodies of water like muddy ponds, lake edges, and slow-moving streams. Extensive winter range throughout Central and South America. Listen for piercing, high-pitched “tsee-weet!” call.

### Spotted Sandpiper



Small shorebird. Constantly bobs its tail while working edges of streams, ponds, and lakes for invertebrates. Several individuals may be found at the same body of water, but never forms tight flocks. Underparts spotted in summer; plain in winter. Listen for two- or three-noted whistled call as they flush from shorelines. Distinctive wingbeats: snappy and below horizontal.

## Sylviidae: Gnatcatchers

### Blue-gray Gnatcatcher



A tiny, long-tailed, thin-billed songbird. Soft blue-gray above and whitish below, with a thin white eyering. Breeding males have a black band across the forehead. Forages actively for insects, often actively twitching its long tail. Can be found singly or in pairs, sometimes with mixed flocks of other songbirds, especially during migration. Two populations: Eastern birds breed in deciduous woodlands, often near water; western birds typically breed in drier, brushier habitats. Winters from the southern U.S. to northern Central America.

Compare with Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, especially the tail pattern from below: Blue-gray is mostly white, with very limited black. Also very similar to Black-capped Gnatcatcher on the wintering grounds in West Mexico; Blue-gray has a higher-pitched call.

## Turdidae: Thrushes

### Wood Thrush



Boldly patterned thrush is bright rusty-brown above with black spots on the white belly. Smaller than a robin, but larger than Hermit Thrush. Sticks to wooded areas, often hopping on the ground. More often heard than seen: listen for its incredible, flute-like song. Population is declining; winters in Central America.

## Tyrannidae: Tyrant Flycatchers

### Great Crested Flycatcher



Fairly large flycatcher of mature forests. Relatively bright and richly colored for a *Myiarchus* flycatcher; especially note bright yellow belly, grayish throat and breast, and dull pinkish base to the lower mandible. Most easily identified by voice: listen for loud, rising “queEEEP” and various rolling, burry calls. Breeds in deciduous forests throughout eastern North America; winters as far south as northern South America. Compare especially with Brown-crested Flycatcher on the wintering grounds

## Vireonidae: Vireos

### Red-eyed Vireo



Plain olive-green above and whitish below with no wingbars. Red eye of adults is not always easy to see; immatures have brown eyes. Dark stripe through and above eye. Larger and thicker-billed than warblers. Breeds in mature deciduous forest. Often sings nearly nonstop throughout the day; listen for repetitive musical phrases coming from the treetops. Often with flocks of chickadees and warblers during migration. Winters in South America, where it could be confused with the very similar Chivi Vireo. Best distinguished by voice.

**Warbling Vireo**

Rather nondescript vireo with a blank face. Pale grayish-olive overall with a faint white eyebrow, darker grayish crown, and pale yellowish wash on the sides. Often confused with Philadelphia Vireo; note Warbling shows brightest color on sides (not throat) and fainter dark eyeline (especially indistinct in front of the eye). Warbling is also longer-tailed and has a slightly longer, thinner bill than Philadelphia. Scratchy warbling song is heard from treetops, particularly in riparian areas and cottonwoods. Migrants and wintering birds can be found in any wooded habitat, as far south as Central America.

## Ordinary Time (early)

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Ordinary Time begins with a rush from the high of Easter, and quickly moves into Pentecost and Ascension day. For the purposes of this bird guide, we folded Pentecost and Ascension into Ordinary Time, and split Ordinary Time into two halves: early and late.

Maybe you are putting away your celebratory white or red linens and exchanging them for green ones. But do not confuse what is *ordinary* for what is *insignificant*. The work of God and the Church continues, and so do the birds. If you are fortunate, you will see some wrens, flycatchers, and woodpeckers. -e

## Accipitridae: Kites, Hawks & Eagles

### Cooper's Hawk



Small to medium-sized hawk with relatively short rounded wings and rounded tail. Adults are gray above with pale orange barring below; immatures are browner and streaky. Very similar to Sharp-shinned Hawk, but larger with bigger head. Also note deeper, slower wingbeats. Breeds in forested areas; more common in suburban areas than Sharp-shinned Hawk. Feeds mainly on birds captured in flight. Often stalks feeders in search of prey.

## Alcedinidae: Kingfishers

### Belted Kingfisher



Stocky and large-headed with a shaggy crest. Bill is long, straight, thick, and pointed. Powder blue above with white underparts and blue breast band. Females have additional rusty band across belly. Almost always solitary, perched along edges of streams, lakes, and estuaries. Flies along rivers and shorelines giving loud rattling calls. Hunts for fish by plunging headfirst into the water, either directly from a perch or hovering.

## Ardeidae: Bitterns, Herons & Egrets

### Great Blue Heron



Huge gray heron, no other similar species in range. Note large yellow-orange bill, short black plumes on head, and black and chestnut pattern on shoulder. Immatures are more brownish than adults, and have a dark crown. Fairly common and widespread throughout North America; wintering range extends to northern South America. Occurs in almost any wetland habitat, from small ponds to marshes to saltwater bays. Usually seen singly but can gather in numbers where food is plentiful. White form, sometimes considered a separate species (“Great White Heron”), is found in southern Florida and the Caribbean. It is most similar to Great Egret but has a larger bill.

## Great Egret



Large, lanky, long-necked white heron. Size and black legs help separate from other egrets. Widespread and fairly common across the globe. Bill color varies across range: always yellow in the Americas, black in breeding season elsewhere. Occurs in any shallow wetland, including ponds, marshes, and tidal mudflats. Slowly stalks prey in shallow water. Often seen singly, but sometimes gathers in large numbers where food is plentiful. Breeds in colonies, frequently mixed with other egrets and herons.

**Green Heron**

Small, dark heron with a blue-green back, rusty-colored neck and dark cap. Usually in a crouched position, partly concealed in vegetation, waiting patiently for prey. In flight, looks like an awkward crow with broad wings, neck tucked in, and legs extending just beyond the tail. Often vocal when flushed; gives a sharp “skeiw!”

## Cardinalidae: Tanagers, Cardinals, Grosbeaks & Dickcissels

### Blue Grosbeak



Beefy, big-headed, large-billed bunting. Male is deep cobalt blue with rufous wingbars. Females are warm brown with rufous or buffy wingbars. Always look for enormous bill to separate from other buntings; also note unstreaked underparts and slightly longer tail. Swishes tail like other buntings. Fairly common in overgrown fields with hedgerows and bushes. Breeds mostly in the southern half of the U.S. and northern Mexico; winters throughout Central America. Often gathers in flocks in the winter.

## Indigo Bunting



Breeding males are entirely blue with a slightly darker head. Females are plain brown with a whitish throat, bluish tail, and faint streaks on the underparts. Breeds in shrubby areas at the edge of forests and fields. Males often sing from a high exposed perch. Winters mainly in Middle America and the Caribbean, where it frequently gathers in flocks in weedy fields. Females can be very difficult to distinguish from Lazuli Bunting, although their range doesn't overlap much. Indigo usually shows more streaking on the underparts; also note fainter wingbars, duller breast, and more contrasting whitish throat.

**Northern Cardinal**

Striking and familiar backyard bird throughout most of eastern North America; also occurs in the southwestern U.S. and fairly extensively in Mexico. Crest, large red bill, and long tail render this species distinctive even with a poor view. Male is entirely red with a black face. Female is brownish overall with redder wings and tail. Usually seen in pairs or small groups near dense cover, especially thickets near forest edges. Frequently visits bird feeders. Listen for high-pitched metallic chips and series of loud, sweet whistles.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak**

Breeding adult males are striking black and white with bright red triangle on breast. Nonbreeding males, females, and immatures are streaky below with a bold head pattern. Always look for the very thick, pale pinkish bill. Fairly common and widespread in eastern North America, especially in deciduous forests. Winters to northern South America. Visits feeders. Listen for sweet robinlike song and squeaky call. Females are sometimes confused with Purple Finch but note much larger overall size, large pinkish bill, and bolder white markings on wings. Also compare females and immature males with extremely similar Black-headed Grosbeak, which is usually identifiable by range. Rose-breasted usually has more extensive, coarser streaking on underparts and usually lacks orange tones.

## Cathartidae: New World Vultures

### Black Vulture



Large raptor. Uniform black with silvery patches on undersides of wingtips. In flight, broad, rounded wings with distinct “fingers” are held flat like a board. Notice very short tail and small black head. Soars in flocks, often with other vultures and hawks. Flight style is distinctive; bat-like, strong snappy wingbeats followed by short glides. Look for them along highways eating roadkill, or picking through dumpsters.

## Columbidae: Pigeons and Doves

### Mourning Dove



Svelte with a long, pointed tail. Plain brown overall with dark spots on wing. Juvenile is covered with pale scaly pattern, but is much larger and longer-tailed than ground doves. Widespread and common throughout much of North America, from southern Canada to Panama, including the Caribbean. Found in a variety of habitats from agricultural fields to lightly wooded areas. Loves suburbs, where it often sits on telephone wires and visits bird feeders. Avoids dense forest, but found on forest edges. Usually seen in pairs or small flocks, sometimes gathering in larger numbers, especially in winter. Listen for distinctive cooing song and whistling wings as it takes off.

## Cuculidae: Cuckoos and Anis

### Yellow-billed Cuckoo



Slender, long-tailed bird that is more often heard than seen. Brown above and white below, with a yellow bill. Look for the large white spots on underside of tail. Wings flash rufous, especially obvious in flight. Stealthy and shy in dense forests and riparian areas, often sitting motionless for long periods of time. Feeds mainly on caterpillars and other insects. Uncommon but widespread breeder across much of North America; more southerly distribution than Black-billed Cuckoo. Winters in South America, where care should be taken to separate from very similar Pearly-breasted Cuckoo, which lacks rufous tones in wing. Separated from Black-billed Cuckoo by bill color, wing color, and tail pattern. Listen for its hoarse cooing song and knocking calls.

## Fringillidae: Siskins, Crossbills & Allies

### American Goldfinch



Small finch. Sharply pointed bill is pink in summer, grayish-brown in winter. Small head, long wings, and short, notched tail. Adult males in spring and summer are bright yellow with black forehead and wings. Females are dull yellow below and olive above with two distinct wingbars. In winter, they are drab, buffy-brown. Active and acrobatic. Sometimes in large numbers at feeders or on ground below. Found in weedy fields, cultivated areas, roadsides, orchards, and backyards.

## House Finch



Frequents suburban settings across North America, along with open woods, brushy field edges, and deserts. Males vary in shades and intensity of red. Some males are yellow or orange. Females are drab gray-brown overall with plain faces and blurry streaks on underparts. Similar to Purple and Cassin's Finch, but House Finch males are more orangey-red with color equally bright on crown, throat, and breast. Red color is mostly restricted to head and upper chest, contrasting with cold gray-brown nape, back, and wings. Pale sides show distinct brown streaks, lacking red tones. Females lack bold face pattern and have more diffuse patterning overall. Often sings loudly in neighborhoods and visits feeders.

## Hirundinidae: Martins and Swallows

### Bank Swallow



Small and compact swallow, with quick flicking wingbeats. Brown above and white below, with a contrasting dark chest band. Note the relatively long, notched tail and narrow, pointed wings. Breeds in colonies; builds nest by tunneling into sandbanks. Can be seen over any open habitat including fields, marshes, and ponds, often in mixed flocks with other species of swallows. Compare with other small brownish swallows where overlaps occur in its extensive global range.

## Barn Swallow



A fairly large, colorful swallow. Usually easy to identify with its long, forked tail and dark rump. Iridescent navy-blue above with a rich orange throat and forehead. Underparts vary across range, from bright buffy-orange to whitish. Occurs in any open habitat, especially large fields and wetlands. Often seen foraging in flocks, sometimes mixed with other species of swallow. Typically nests close to human habitation; builds a muddy cup nest in a barn or under a dock. Listen for dry, scratchy “svit svit” calls. Note head and breast pattern and tail length to help separate from various similar species in Africa, Asia, and Australia (e.g., Welcome Swallow, Angolan Swallow, Pacific Swallow).

**Cliff Swallow**

Compact swallow with a short, square tail. In flight, looks slightly less angular than other swallows, with more rounded wings. Note pale buffy-orange rump, which separates Cliff from most other swallows in range. Also look for dark throat and pale forehead. Widespread and fairly common, especially in western North America. Breeds under bridges, overpasses, and culverts. Winters in South America. Compare especially with Cave Swallow, which has a paler throat and orange forehead.

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow**

Plainest swallow in North America. Plain brown above with indistinct brown wash across throat and breast. Wings are relatively broad; tail is short and square (or slightly notched). Juveniles have rusty wingbars. “Ridgway’s” subspecies, mainly found on the Yucatan peninsula, is larger and lankier, almost recalling a martin. Look for the deeper notch in the tail and dark-tipped undertail coverts. Often seen near water, sometimes in mixed flocks with other swallows. Breeds in holes and crevices, often along riverbanks or under a bridge. Not a colonial nester like Bank Swallow. Call is a low, grating buzz that rises slightly in pitch. Compare with Bank Swallow, which has a contrasting dark chest band. Also very similar to Southern Rough-winged Swallow, which overlaps in Central America. Southern Rough-winged has a brighter tawny throat and paler rump.

**Purple Martin**

Large, dark swallow. Distinctive north of Mexico, where it is the largest swallow. Adult males are dark overall with a purplish-blue iridescence visible at close range. Females are grayer with iridescence on the crown and back, and variable splotchy patterning on the underparts. Immatures lack any purplish color and have a whiter belly. Gives a distinctive liquid gurgling call. In the eastern U.S., nests exclusively in nest boxes and martin houses; also uses natural cavities in parts of the western U.S. and Mexico. Departs breeding grounds in the late summer, locally staging in massive numbers. Winters primarily in the Amazon basin of South America. During migration and winter, identification is complicated by several other extremely similar species of martin. Identification features are not well known; some are best left unidentified.

## Tree Swallow



Common and widespread throughout most of North America, breeding as far north as Alaska and wintering to Panama. A medium-sized swallow, with gleaming white underparts. Adult males are bright iridescent blue-green above; females and immatures are duller brownish with limited or no iridescence. Always note compact shape, fairly broad wings, and slightly notched tail. Occurs in a variety of open habitats including grassy fields, lakes, and marshes. Often in flocks, sometimes mixed with other species of swallows. Breeds in cavities, including human-made nest boxes. Listen for cheery gurgling calls. Compare especially with Violet-green Swallow; note Tree Swallow does not show extensive white wrapping around the cheek or the sides of the rump.

## Icteridae: Blackbirds, Meadowlarks & Orioles

### Eastern Meadowlark



Streaked brown above and yellow below with distinctive black “V” on breast. In flight, short wings and spiky tail with white outer feathers are apparent. Breeds in fields and grasslands throughout eastern North America, with a disjunct population (“Lilian’s” Meadowlark) in the Southwest. Also occurs throughout Mexico and Central America, into northern South America, and in Cuba. Winters in dense grassy habitats, often in small loose groups. Extremely similar to Western Meadowlark and best distinguished by voice: listen for high-pitched, clear whistles and short buzzy calls. In winter, plumage looks slightly darker and more contrasty than Western Meadowlark, with a more contrasting head pattern. Eastern is somewhat more tied to more pristine grassland habitats, but with some overlap.

## Orchard Oriole



Small, slender oriole. Adult males are a unique rich chestnut-brown color with a black head. Females are dull yellow-green with white wingbars. Immature males are similar to females, but with a black throat and mask. Breeds in open woodlands, river edges, pastures with scattered trees, and brushy orchards. Visits feeders with nectar and fruits. Departs breeding grounds early and heads to wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America, where it can be found in any open or wooded habitat. Compare with female Hooded Oriole, which is larger and longer-tailed and has a narrower, more curved bill.

**Mimidae: Catbirds, Mockingbirds & Thrashers****Brown Thrasher**

Longer-tailed and slightly larger than a robin. Rich rufous upperparts and heavy dark streaking on whitish underparts. Yellow eyes. Often skulks in thick vegetation in scrubby fields and forest edges. Mimics other species in its song, delivering a complex string of paired phrases.

**Gray Catbird**

Medium-sized songbird, smaller than a robin, with a smooth gray body, black cap, and rusty-red undertail. Sometimes mimics other species in complex, jumbled song. Prefers dense shrubs and small trees in forest edges, streamside thickets, and old fields. Occasionally feeds on suet.

**Northern Mockingbird**

Gray with whitish underparts and long tail. In flight, it becomes much flashier with large white patches on the black wings and tail. Pale eye. Found in a variety of habitats with bushes and trees, from neighborhoods to desert scrub and old pastures. Mimics birds, car alarms, slamming doors, and other noises in its song, repeating a phrase 5-7 times before switching to next set of notes.

## Paridae: Chickadees and Titmice

### Carolina Chickadee



This tiny, plump-bodied, big-headed bird is a familiar woodland resident and backyard visitor in the southeastern U.S. The only chickadee in almost all of its range. Gray overall with contrasting head pattern: black cap, white cheek, and black throat. Short, stubby bill is used for hammering open seeds. Often the core of mixed flocks of songbirds. Visits feeders. Nearly identical to Black-capped Chickadee, but range barely overlaps. Especially note voice, duller gray wings, and less buffy coloration on flanks of Carolina. Beware that hybrids occur frequently in the overlap zone and some are best left unidentified.

## Parulidae: Wood Warblers

### Black-and-white Warbler



Distinctive warbler with bold black-and-white stripes over entire body. Adult males have black throat and cheek; females and immatures have white throat and paler cheek. Creeps along branches like a nuthatch, searching for insects. Breeds in mature deciduous or mixed forests; winters in a wider variety of wooded habitats as far south as northern South America. Listen for high pitched “squeaky-wheel” song. Breeding male Blackpoll Warbler is potentially confusing, but note different behavior and face pattern.

**Chestnut-sided Warbler**

Breeding birds show yellow cap, black triangle under eye, streaked back and reddish-brown sides. Looks remarkably different in fall with distinctive lime green above and gray below with bold white eyering. Breeds mainly in secondary forests, especially areas with large shrubs and young trees. Does well in disturbed habitats, particularly power line cuts and areas that have been logged. Forages for insects. Winters in Central America.

## Passerellidae: New World Sparrows and Towhees

### Chipping Sparrow



Small, slender, and incredibly cute sparrow. Plain grayish breast, rusty cap, and black eyeline in breeding season. Not as bright in winter, but still shows a brown cap and dark eyeline. Juveniles are extensively streaky. Common and widespread throughout most of North America. Usually found in open woodlands, scrubby areas, or even in suburban settings. Often gathers in flocks in fall and winter. Visits feeders. Frequently heard singing a fairly dry trill. Compare with similar Clay-colored, American Tree, and Brewer's sparrows, but look for Chipping Sparrow's gray rump and dark eyeline.

### Eastern Towhee



Large, striking, long-tailed sparrow of the eastern U.S. and Canada. Black above with bright rufous sides and a white belly. Eye color varies from white (in the southeastern U.S) to dark red (further north). In flight, note white corners on tail. Also note females are browner than jet-black males. Most similar to Spotted Towhee, but Eastern is mostly black above, only showing single white patch on folded wing. Hybridizes with Spotted Towhee in central U.S. and south-central Canada; hybrids usually show intermediate wing pattern. Inhabits scrubby areas and forest edges with thickets. Forages primarily by hopping along ground, scraping away leaf litter. Males sing from atop shrubs and low trees. Visits feeders.

## Field Sparrow



Small, slender, blank-faced sparrow. Can be either gray or buffy overall, but always note small pink bill, plain face, and thin white eyering. Inhabits overgrown fields and other brushy areas in eastern North America. Often joins flocks of sparrows in winter. Can visit feeders, but less frequently than Chipping or American Tree sparrows. Song is a series of bell-like notes, accelerating like a dropped ping-pong ball.

## Song Sparrow



One of the most common and widespread sparrows in North America. Fairly large with a long, rounded tail. Overall coarsely patterned with gray and brown, usually with more reddish-brown wings and tail. Look especially for thick brown streaks on the underparts and a broad dark mustache stripe. Significant variation in plumage geographically: relatively pale and rusty in the southwestern U.S.; blacker streaking in California; overall dusky in the Pacific Northwest. Larger, longer-tailed and usually more rusty than Savannah Sparrow. Found in a variety of scrubby habitats both near and far from human development, especially edges of fields, often near water. Listen for husky "chimp" calls and melodic song with chips and trills.

## Passeridae: Old World Sparrows

### House Sparrow



Widespread and abundant in cities, neighborhoods and farms. Avoids dense woods. Flocks cluster in dense bushes, bustling around and chattering to one another. Males have smart black bibs, bright rufous napes, and stunningly patterned wings with brilliant buffs and browns. Underparts are pale pearly-gray. Females are plain brown with cute face and lighter eyebrow. Native to Eurasia; introduced to much of the rest of the world.

## Phasianidae: Grouse and Turkeys

### Wild Turkey



Among the largest birds in North America. The large-bodied, long-legged and small-headed look of a turkey is distinctive. Appears dark from a distance. Often seen in small groups in open fields near woods. Gobbling often audible in the spring and early summer.

## Picidae: Woodpeckers

### Northern Flicker



Large, brownish woodpecker with black barring on the back and black spots on the belly. Easily recognized in flight by its bright white rump. Also note large black crescent-shaped mark on breast. Wings and tail flash yellow or red, depending on the subspecies. Generally “Yellow-shafted” is found in eastern and northern North America, and “Red-shafted” is found in western North America as far south as Oaxaca. Birds from Chiapas to Nicaragua are larger with entirely brown crown, sometimes considered a separate species. Typically singly or in pairs, but can gather in large loose groups during migration and winter. Often seen feeding on the ground in open areas, foraging for ants and worms. Vocal and conspicuous: listen for loud “kleer!” call and series of laughing notes.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker**

Medium-sized woodpecker that is not well named; rarely is the slight red wash on the belly visible! Instead, note the black-and-white barring on the back and wings, plain buffy breast and face, and red nape. On adult males, look for the red extending onto the crown. In flight, look for the white rump. Found in forested and suburban areas, typically preferring deciduous trees. Slowly expanding its range northward. Visits feeders, especially for suet. Nests in cavities.

**Red-headed Woodpecker**

Incredibly striking bird: adults have brilliant crimson head, black back, large white wing patches, and white belly. These large patches of solid color are unlike other woodpeckers with more intricate patterns.

Immatures have brownish heads. Found in open forests with clear understories, including pine plantations and standing timber in beaver swamps. Often social, found in family groups. Regularly seen caching nuts in the fall, perched on snags, and sallying out to catch insects. Occasionally visits feeders. Nests in cavities.

## Scolopacidae: Sandpipers

### Least Sandpiper



Tiny brownish sandpiper. Most easily distinguished from other small sandpipers by darker, more brownish coloration. Juveniles are particularly bright with rusty tones on the upperparts. Also note fine-tipped bill and yellowish legs, but beware legs can be covered with dark mud and other peeps (like Semipalmated Sandpiper) can rarely show slightly greenish legs. Habitat and behavior are helpful supporting clues. Typically forages in a crouched posture, picking for invertebrates in the mud. Often in small loose groups, but not in large, tight flocks like Semipalmated or Western Sandpipers. Prefers drier mud, often on the higher edges of mudflats or small patches of water in marshes. Widespread and common, especially inland. Breeds in various wetland habitats throughout Alaska and Canada. Winters from the southern U.S. to South

America. Listen for high-pitched, rolling “greeep!” calls.

## Strigidae: Typical Owls

### Eastern Screech-Owl



Small, stocky owl with large head and no neck. Pointed ear tufts are often raised. Varies in color from gray to bright rufous (reddish-brown). Intricate pattern is perfect for camouflage against tree bark. Yellow eyes. Active at night when they prey on small birds and mammals. More often heard than seen; listen for its descending whinny and longer trill. Roosts and nests in cavities, including nest boxes. Found in a variety of habitats with trees, particularly near water.

## Sylviidae: Gnatcatchers

### Blue-gray Gnatcatcher



A tiny, long-tailed, thin-billed songbird. Soft blue-gray above and whitish below, with a thin white eyering. Breeding males have a black band across the forehead. Forages actively for insects, often actively twitching its long tail. Can be found singly or in pairs, sometimes with mixed flocks of other songbirds, especially during migration. Two populations: Eastern birds breed in deciduous woodlands, often near water; western birds typically breed in drier, brushier habitats. Winters from the southern U.S. to northern Central America.

Compare with Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, especially the tail pattern from below: Blue-gray is mostly white, with very limited black. Also very similar to Black-capped Gnatcatcher on the wintering grounds in West Mexico; Blue-gray has a higher-pitched call.

## Trochilidae: Hummingbirds

### Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Small hummingbird found in a variety of woodland and brushy habitats. Male distinctive with ruby-red throat and black chin. Female has whitish underparts with almost no buffy tones (perhaps a very light wash on flanks). Readily comes to sugar water feeders and flower gardens. Default summer hummingbird over most of eastern U.S. and Canada. Winters south to Panama. Very difficult to distinguish from Black-chinned Hummingbird, especially females and young males; thankfully limited range overlap. Ruby-throated averages somewhat brighter green above, shorter- and straighter-billed, and has slightly narrower outer wing feathers, but these differences are all extremely subtle.

## Troglodytidae: Wrens

### Carolina Wren



Bold white eyebrow. Warm brown above, buffy-orange underparts. Slightly decurved bill. Tail is about as long as body and often cocked up. Usually in hiding in dense vegetation, tangled understory, or brush piles in forested areas. Nests in peculiar places around backyards, such as tucked in a drainpipe or grill. Occasionally feeds on suet or mealworms at feeding stations. Listen for loud, ringing song and variety of calls. Unlike House Wren they are not migratory and stay nearby their breeding grounds year-round.

### House Wren



At home in suburbs, parks, rural farmland, and other open areas with thick tangles. In the breeding season, it is often singing its effervescent song from the top of a bush or fence post. Plumage doesn't show much contrast: plain brown overall, slightly paler below, with some dark barring on the wings and tail. Lacks white eyebrow. In winter they are more secretive, preferring brushy tangles, thickets, and hedgerows.

## Turdidae: Thrushes

### Eastern Bluebird



Adult males are striking royal blue above with bright orange throat and breast and bright white belly. Females are paler overall; grayish with orange on breast and sides of neck, and white belly. Favors fields and open woods. Often in small groups. Frequently perches on wires or fence posts. Nests in cavities. Listen for its soft, chortling calls.

## Tyrannidae: Tyrant Flycatchers

### Eastern Kingbird



Fairly large flycatcher, dark gray above and clean white below with blacker head. Look for white tail tip. Name is somewhat misleading; it does occur over most of eastern North America but also reaches as far west as British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. Fairly common and conspicuous; perches out in the open, often on tall trees, snags, fences, and utility lines. Watches for large insects and makes quick flights to snatch them. Listen for metallic twittering calls. Winters in lowlands of South America.

**Eastern Phoebe**

A drab, medium-sized flycatcher. Brownish above and pale below, often with a light yellowish wash on the belly. Watch for constant tail-wagging, and also note duller wingbars than Empidonax flycatchers. Common and familiar throughout eastern North America, wintering as far south as southern Mexico. Usually seen singly or in pairs in relatively open habitats such as woodland edge, brushy fields, or edges of ponds. Often nests under eaves of buildings and other human-made structures. An early migrant, returning north to breed much earlier than other flycatchers. Listen for its harsh “FEE-bee” song in the spring, but don’t get confused by Black-capped Chickadee’s higher-pitched, sweet whistled song of a similar pattern!

**Eastern Wood-Pewee**

Drab grayish-brown flycatcher found in forested areas and edges. Nondescript overall with two pale wingbars; bill usually shows extensive orange on lower mandible. Note very long wings and larger size than Empidonax flycatchers. Typically seen on a high perch, occasionally sallying out to snatch an insect. Essentially identical to Western Wood-Pewee; averages paler overall with stronger upper wingbar, but reliably distinguished only by voice. Listen for clear whistled tones, especially the distinctive “PEE-a-weeEEE!” song.

**Great Crested Flycatcher**

Fairly large flycatcher of mature forests. Relatively bright and richly colored for a Myiarchus flycatcher; especially note bright yellow belly, grayish throat and breast, and dull pinkish base to the lower mandible. Most easily identified by voice: listen for loud, rising “queeEEEP” and various rolling, burry calls. Breeds in deciduous forests throughout eastern North America; winters as far south as northern South America. Compare especially with Brown-crested Flycatcher on the wintering grounds

### Willow Flycatcher



Small flycatcher, extremely similar to several other species. Prefers shrubby open areas, especially around marshes. Western population prefers understory in riparian woods. Brownish above and pale below with barely any eyering. Wings dark with distinct white wingbars (brownish in Western population). Nearly identical to Alder Flycatcher; once considered the same species. Also compare with Least Flycatcher, which is very similar but has slightly shorter wingtips and a bolder eyering. Willow is larger, larger-headed, and longer-billed than other species of small flycatcher in the West; also note lack of a distinct eyering. Best identified by voice: song is a sneezing “FITZ-bew”; call is a dry “whit.” Silent birds, especially in migration, often best left unidentified.

## Vireonidae: Vireos

### Red-eyed Vireo



Plain olive-green above and whitish below with no wingbars. Red eye of adults is not always easy to see; immatures have brown eyes. Dark stripe through and above eye. Larger and thicker-billed than warblers. Breeds in mature deciduous forest. Often sings nearly nonstop throughout the day; listen for repetitive musical phrases coming from the treetops. Often with flocks of chickadees and warblers during migration. Winters in South America, where it could be confused with the very similar Chivi Vireo. Best distinguished by voice.

## Ordinary Time (late)

Ordinary Time continues with some birds starting to migrate south. The weather gets colder and the days get shorter. Look out for our personal favorite, the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, or Bill Haley's personal favorite, the Pileated Woodpecker. -e

## Accipitridae: Kites, Hawks & Eagles

### Bald Eagle



Majestic adults have blackish-brown body with white head and tail. Several stages of immature plumages aren't quite as majestic, from fully dark brown to messy and mottled with large patches of white. Look especially for white mottling on the belly on immatures. Scavenges and hunts near bodies of water. Soars with wings flat, like a large, dark plank. Head appears large in flight; projects far in front of wings. Surprisingly weak-sounding vocalization is a series of high-pitched whistles.

### Cooper's Hawk



Small to medium-sized hawk with relatively short rounded wings and rounded tail. Adults are gray above with pale orange barring below; immatures are browner and streaky. Very similar to Sharp-shinned Hawk, but larger with bigger head. Also note deeper, slower wingbeats. Breeds in forested areas; more common in suburban areas than Sharp-shinned Hawk. Feeds mainly on birds captured in flight. Often stalks feeders in search of prey.

## Apodidae: Swifts

### Chimney Swift



The “flying cigar” with a blunt head, squared-off tail, and long, sickle-shaped wings. Body is dark gray with a slightly paler throat. Flies all day long with ridiculously fast, snappy wingbeats. Nests and roosts in chimneys. Often seen in small groups, twittering and cruising around town in search of insects. The only swift in the eastern U.S.

## Bombycillidae: Waxwings

### Cedar Waxwing



Plump, smooth-plumaged bird with distinctive thin, high-pitched call. Adults have a sleek crest, black mask, pale yellow wash on the belly, and yellow-tipped tail. Juveniles are drabber than adults, with coarse streaking on the breast and a reduced mask. Widespread and fairly common in open woodlands, orchards, and shrubby areas throughout most of North America. Winter range is variable and somewhat dependent on fruit crops; sometimes ventures as far south as Panama. Often gathers in large flocks, especially around fruiting trees. Compare with Bohemian Waxwing in the northern part of range; Cedar is smaller, browner, and has a white (not rufous) undertail.

## Caprimulgidae: Goatsuckers

### Common Nighthawk



Camouflaged to blend into daytime roosts. Intricately patterned with gray and brown. Often roosts along tree branches or on the ground. Feeds at night on large insects. Watch for them flying under bright lights at ballgames or supermarkets. Distinctive fluttering flight style, with wings usually held in a V-shape between bursts of flaps and maneuvers to snatch insects. Very similar to Lesser and Antillean Nighthawks; note voice and location of white wing patch close to base of primaries.

## Cathartidae: New World Vultures

### Turkey Vulture



Large raptor. Appears dark from a distance. Up close, dark brown above with bare red head. In flight, undersides of wings are two-toned; lighter on the entire trailing edge of the wing, opposed to just wingtips on Black Vulture. Wings are held slightly raised when soaring, making a “V” when seen head-on. Tends to wobble in flight. Wingbeats slower and deeper than Black Vulture. Glides relatively low while sniffing for carrion, or riding thermals to higher vantage points. Also huddles around roadkill or dumpsters.

## Charadriidae: Plovers

### Killdeer



Common, large plover. Slender shape with long wings and tail. Look for two black breast bands, unique among plovers in its range. Often nests near human development: parking lots, school roofs, road edges, and farms, usually on bare gravel. Adults perform broken-wing displays to distract predators from their nests and young. Gathers in larger numbers in migration and winter, often in fields with short grass or barren dirt. Occurs throughout North America; more local along the Pacific coast of northern South America. Can be very vocal; listen for loud namesake “kill-deer” call.

## Columbidae: Pigeons and Doves

### Rock Pigeon



Fairly large pigeon with wild and feral populations throughout the world. True wild birds nest on cliffs and in caves from western Europe to central Asia. Pale gray overall with two bold black wingbars and iridescent purple and green on neck. Feral varieties are common in cities and farmland, often in large flocks. Variable plumage: some identical to wild-type birds, but can be completely black, white, or orangey-brown and any combination in between.

## Corvidae: Jays, Crows & Magpies

### American Crow



This is the common crow over much of the U.S. and Canada. Most easily identified by voice, a familiar “caw,” often repeated. Common in any open habitats, including fields, open woodlands, marshes, and cities, thriving around humans. Very social, usually seen in flocks, sometimes numbering in the hundreds or even thousands. Aggressive, sometimes seen chasing away hawks and owls. Separated from ravens by smaller size, smaller bill, shorter tail, and shorter, broader wings. Compare with Fish Crow, which is extremely similar in appearance, and best separated by voice. Includes the species formerly known as Northwestern Crow.

### Blue Jay



Familiar but stunning jay found year-round throughout most of eastern North America. Bright blue above and pale gray below with a fluffy crest. Also look for black necklace and black and white markings on the wings and tail. Pairs or small groups travel through mature deciduous or coniferous woodlands, often revealing their presence with loud, harsh “jay” calls. Frequently visits bird feeders, where it is often aggressive towards other birds.

**Fish Crow**

A relatively small, glossy crow. Very difficult to separate from American Crow by appearance; look for Fish Crow's slightly more tapered wings, quicker wingbeats, and shorter legs. Most easily identified by voice, a nasal "eh-uh" or single nasal caws. Mostly restricted to the southeastern U.S., especially along the coast, but range expanding slightly northward and inland in recent years. Often near water, but also seems especially fond of fast-food parking lots and dumpsters.

## Falconidae: Falcons

### American Kestrel



Petite falcon roughly the same size as Mourning Dove, but with a larger head and wider tail. In flight, note long, narrow wings and square-tipped tail. Often seen perched on telephone wires, along roadsides, in open country with short vegetation and few trees. From a perch or hovering, they usually drop to the ground to snatch small mammals and insects. Nests in cavities. Widespread across the Americas.

## Fringillidae: Siskins, Crossbills & Allies

### Purple Finch



Males suffused with raspberry red, especially on head and breast. Compared to House Finch, males lack distinct streaks on sides and are overall more colorful, especially on back and wings. Females and first-year males have contrasty head pattern with pale eyebrow and darker cheek; also note well-defined streaks on sides. Breed in coniferous or mixed forests. Winters in a wider variety of habitats with trees. Visits feeders.

## Icteridae: Blackbirds, Meadowlarks & Orioles

### Red-winged Blackbird



Males are black with red shoulder patch that is sometimes concealed. Males have rusty feather edges in the winter. Females are streaked brown and often confused with sparrows. Look for long, sharply pointed bill. Often in flocks, especially in winter. Visits feeders. Breeds in marshes and scrubby, wet fields. Distinctive song, especially as migrants arrive in early spring.

## Paridae: Chickadees and Titmice

### Black-capped Chickadee



This tiny, plump-bodied, big-headed bird is a familiar woodland resident and backyard visitor in the northern U.S. and Canada. Gray overall with light buffy flanks and a contrasting head pattern: black cap, white cheek, and black throat. Short, stubby bill is used for hammering open seeds. Often the core of mixed flocks of songbirds. Visits feeders. Nearly identical to Carolina Chickadee, but range barely overlaps. Especially note voice, brighter white on wings, and buffier flanks on Black-capped. Beware that hybrids occur frequently in the overlap zone and some are best left unidentified.

**Tufted Titmouse**

Common backyard bird in the eastern U.S. Look for its overall gray plumage with paler underparts and orangey sides. Crest is gray, but forehead is black. Often in flocks with chickadees and other songbirds. Listen for clear, whistled “peter-peter-peter.” Visits feeders.

## Parulidae: Wood Warblers

### Yellow-rumped Warbler



One of the most common and widespread warblers; often the core member of mixed warbler flocks during migration, especially early in spring and late in fall. All plumages show a bright yellow rump and yellow on the sides. Most have a white throat that wraps around below the cheek. Breeds in coniferous or mixed forests, often near clearings or edges. In migration and winter, found in any woodland or open shrubby area, including coastal dunes, fields, parks, and residential areas. Often sallies out from a conspicuous perch to snatch insects. Also eats berries in the winter. Calls frequently: a flat “check”. Another distinctive sedentary population, surely a separate species, occurs very locally in the highlands of Guatemala: Goldman’s Warbler. Males are strikingly black overall, and show a mostly yellow throat with white corners.

## Passeridae: Old World Sparrows

### House Sparrow



Widespread and abundant in cities, neighborhoods and farms. Avoids dense woods. Flocks cluster in dense bushes, bustling around and chattering to one another. Males have smart black bibs, bright rufous napes, and stunningly patterned wings with brilliant buffs and browns. Underparts are pale pearly-gray. Females are plain brown with cute face and lighter eyebrow. Native to Eurasia; introduced to much of the rest of the world.

## Picidae: Woodpeckers

### Downy Woodpecker



Tiny woodpecker, common and widespread across much of North America. Black-and-white plumage is nearly identical to the larger Hairy Woodpecker. Focus on the bill: Downy has a very short bill, much shorter than the length of the head. Also note the small black markings on the white outer tail feathers. Pacific population has smaller white spots on the wing and a grayer body than Eastern birds. Occurs in any wooded habitat, though western birds are more restricted to riparian areas. Often forages on smaller branches than Hairy Woodpecker. Familiar visitor to backyard feeders, especially fond of suet. Calls include a soft “pik!” and descending rattle, weaker than Hairy Woodpecker.

### Hairy Woodpecker



Medium-sized woodpecker, common and widespread across North America as far south as western Panama. Black-and-white plumage is nearly identical to the smaller Downy Woodpecker. Focus on the bill: Hairy has a longer bill, about the length of the head. Also look for clean white outer tail feathers. Some variation in color across range; birds in western North America and especially Central America are brownish, with limited white in the wing. Occurs in wooded habitats with large trees. Familiar visitor to backyard feeders, especially fond of suet. Calls include a loud “peek!” and a fast rattle, stronger than Downy Woodpecker.

## Pileated Woodpecker



Large, unmistakable woodpecker. Mostly black, with red crest and bold white stripes on head and neck. Flies with deep, rowing wingbeats, almost like a crow but more irregular; also look for mostly white underwings and white patches on upperwing. Pairs inhabit mature deciduous or coniferous forests with large trees. Makes large oval-shaped holes in decaying trees to search for insects. Listen for slow resonant drumming and loud clucking calls. Occasionally visits feeders in appropriate habitat, especially fond of suet.

### Yellow-bellied Sapsucker



Striking and unmistakable in most of range; the only sapsucker in eastern North America. Long, solid white wing patch helps distinguish it from Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers. Adult male has red cap and throat; females are similar but with white throat; juveniles are messy brownish-gray overall. The namesake yellow belly can be difficult to see and is sometimes almost absent. Often looks disheveled, especially in fall and winter. Compare with the extremely similar Red-naped Sapsucker, which barely overlaps in range. Note male Yellow-bellied has complete black border around red throat patch, and the white markings on the back are more extensive and messy. Occurs in almost any wooded habitat, breeding in the boreal forest across Canada and wintering as far south as Costa Rica. Like other sapsuckers, drills rows of sap wells into tree bark. Listen for irregular drumming (like morse code) and various nasal calls.

## Regulidae: Kinglets

### Ruby-crowned Kinglet



Tiny, hyperactive songbird with an uneven white eyering. Plain olive overall, with slightly brighter greenish edges on the wing and tail feathers. The namesake ruby crown is only present on males, and usually concealed. When agitated, it can be flared up into a bright expressive crest. Breeds in coniferous forests. In migration and winter, found in basically any wooded habitat, including deciduous forests, shrubby woodland, and field edges. Often forages quite low to the ground, sometimes joining mixed flocks of other songbirds. Energetic, moving quickly and flicking its wings. Listen for short, harsh call notes, usually doubled, and surprisingly loud song for such a small bird. Compare with Hutton's Vireo, which is similar in plumage but has a thicker bill and forages more sluggishly.

## Sittidae: Nuthatches

### White-breasted Nuthatch



The largest nuthatch in North America, with distinctive white face, black cap, and blue-gray upperparts. Also note rusty lower belly and undertail coverts. Females have a slightly paler crown than males. Fairly common and widespread, usually in mature woodlands with large trees. Creeps along tree trunks and branches, often upside-down. Sometimes joins mixed flocks with other songbirds. Visits feeders. Listen for insistent yammering calls. Some subtle variation across range, mainly in the darkness of the sides and back, width of the black crown, and vocalizations.

## Vireonidae: Vireos

### Blue-headed Vireo



Attractive, colorful vireo with thick white spectacles. Note dark blue-gray head, yellowish sides, and bold white wingbars. Breeds in forested areas, typically mixed coniferous and deciduous. Migrants can be found in any wooded area, often in flocks with other small songbirds. Winters from the southeastern U.S. to Central America. Blue-headed is the brightest of the "Solitary Vireo" complex, and usually identifiable by range alone. Compare especially with Cassin's Vireo on the wintering grounds, but note Blue-headed is more colorful and contrasty. Especially look for contrast between the dark gray face and white throat. Some birds are best left unidentified. Song is sweeter and slower than other vireos in breeding range.