

# *Birding Basics*

## **Bird Guide & Checklist**

**Common Birds found at  
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge**

This Guide is an educational tool for students engaging in Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's Environmental Education Program.

### **How to Use this Bird Guide & Checklist**

All the birds in this guide are commonly seen on the Wildlife Refuge. Common identifiers (what to look or listen for) are listed. Examples: colors and patterns have arrows pointed to the area to look at; a bird's song or sound is written so it can be read similar to how it sounds.

#### **Habitat Key:**

Look for these symbols to determine that bird's preferred habitat:



**Forest**



**Prairie**



**Wetland**

#### **Checklist:**

Find these symbols and put an X by the right symbol if you see the bird or hear the bird.

#### **Did You:**



**See It**



**Hear It**

# American Robin



**Habitat:** Forest.

Commonly seen on the ground.

 cheerily, cheer up,  
cheer up, cheerily,  
cheer up

**Size:** Robin size

**Look For:** Orange or rust color breast and a dark gray back

**Sound or Song:** Musical whistle

**Food:** berries, worms and insects

**Season:** Robins generally visit the Refuge in the spring, summer, and fall months. They are sometimes seen flocked together during winter.

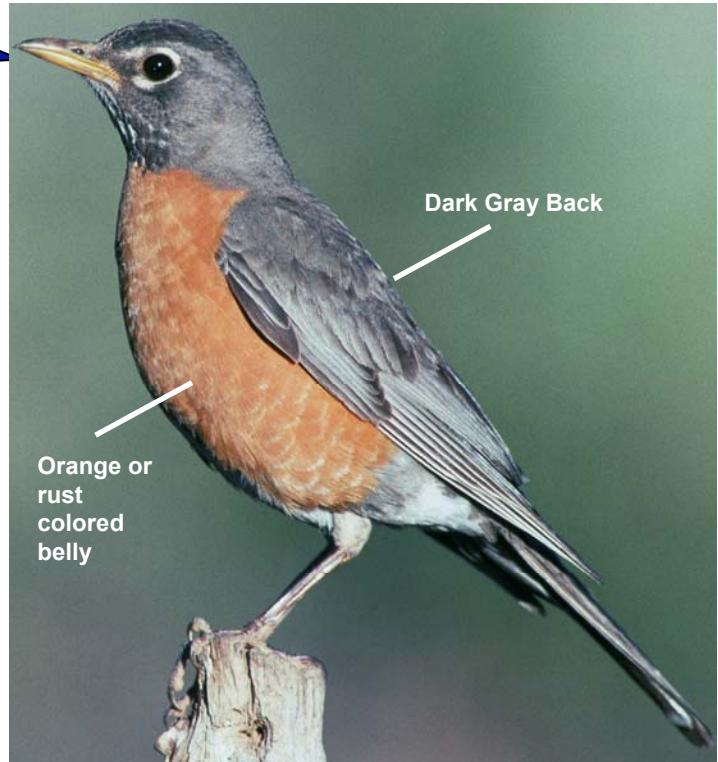
**Did You:**



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_



# American Goldfinch



**Habitat:** Forest.

Commonly in trees, at bird feeders, and in open fields

 ti-di-di-di, per-chick-o-ree  
potato chip, potato chip

**Size:** Sparrow size

**Look For:** Bright yellow body, black cap on head, and black white striped wings

**Sound or Song:** Musical whistle

**Food:** Seed, sometimes insects

**Season:** The goldfinch is a year round resident. In the spring and summer the male is a vibrant yellow, in the winter he is a dull yellow-brown.

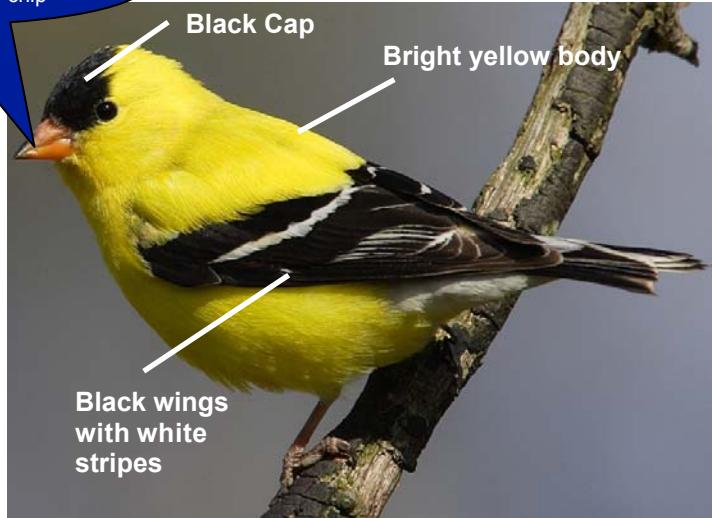
**Did You:**



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_



## Baltimore Oriole



**Habitat:** Forest.

Commonly in trees feeding on insects attracted to feeders with nectar or fruit

**Size:** Robin size

**Look For:** Bright orange and black. Usually the oriole's song is heard before it is seen

**Sound or Song:** Rich musical piping notes

**Food:** Insects, fruit, and nectar

**Season:** Spring through summer

### Did You:



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_



## Cardinal



**Habitat:** Forest.

Commonly seen in trees and frequently visits the refuge feeder

**Size:** Robin size

**Look For:** All red body with a black mask on face, red bill, and distinctive crest on top of head

**Sound or Song:** Musical; many songs

**Food:** Insects, berries

**Season:** Year-round

### Did You:



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_



## Blue Jay



**Habitat:** Forest.  
Commonly seen in trees, such as oaks

**Size:** Robin size

**Look For:** Large bright blue and white bird with a white face, gray belly, and crest on top of head

**Sound or Song:** Harsh cry of "Jayy," also musical notes of "queedle, queedle"

**Food:** Insects, fruits, seeds; visits bird feeders

**Season:** Year-round

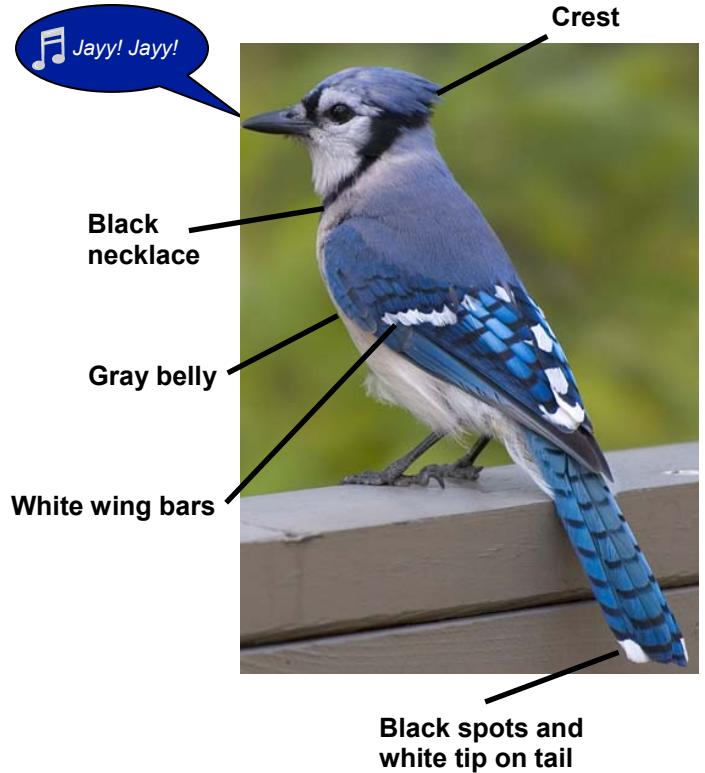
### Did You:



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_



## Phoebe



**Habitat:** Forest.  
Commonly on top of dead tree branches

**Size:** Sparrow size

**Look For:** Gray-brown body, breast and belly light in color; easier to hear than see; pumps tail up and down and spreads tail when perched

**Sound or Song:** Musical whistle - it says its name

**Food:** Insects

**Season:** Late spring and summer

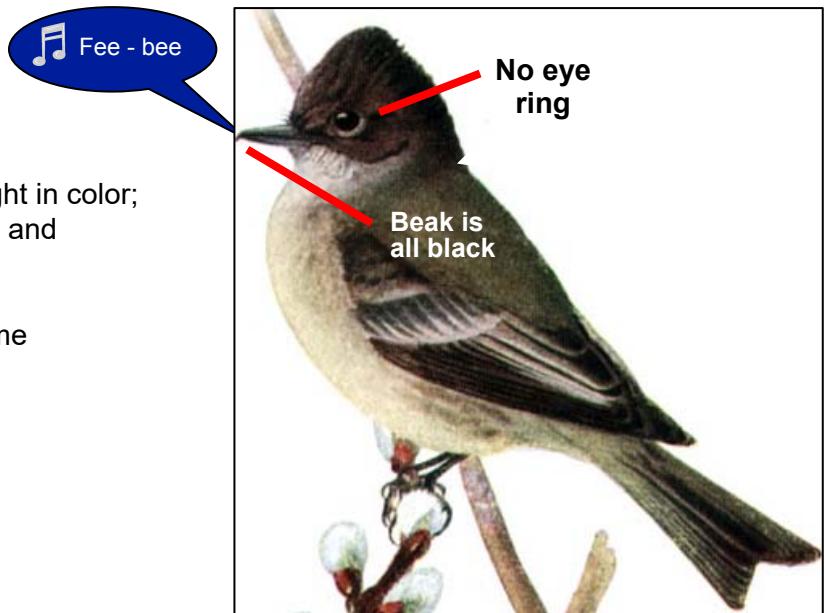
### Did You:



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_



# Song Sparrow



**Habitat:** Forest.

Commonly in thick shrubs and on the ground feeding



**Size:** Sparrow size

**Look For:** Heavily-streaked chest that forms a dark spot

**Sound or Song:** Series of musical and buzzing notes

**Food:** Insects and seeds

**Season:** Late spring to late summer/early fall



Heavily  
streaked  
chest  
forming  
into one  
dark spot

## Did You:



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_

# Black-capped Chickadee



**Habitat:** Forest.

Commonly seen in trees



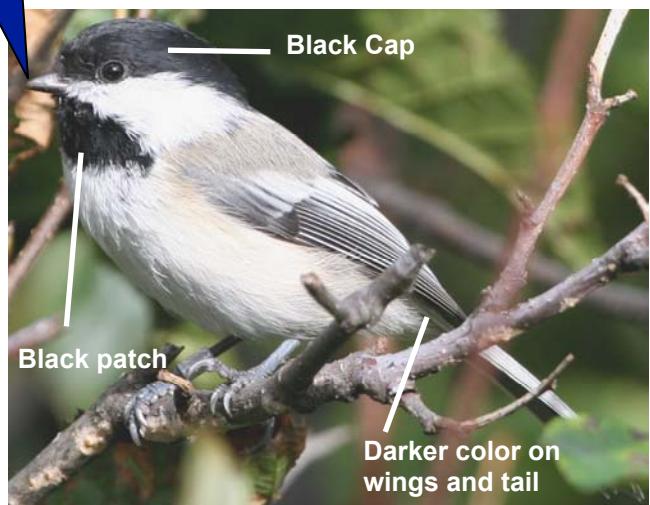
**Size:** Sparrow size

**Look For:** Black cap on top of head and patch on throat; gray and white body; tail and wings darker in color

**Sound or Song:** Sings its name: "Chick-a-dee dee dee"

**Food:** Seeds and fruit; visits bird feeders

**Season:** Year-round



Black Cap

Black patch

Darker color on  
wings and tail

## Did You:



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_

# Pileated Woodpecker



**Habitat:** Forest. Commonly seen in trees and often visits suet feeders

**Size:** Crow size

**Look For:** All black with red crest on head; black wings with white underwing; long gray bill

**Sound or Song:** Listen for a loud drumming as it pecks at trees; the song sounds like laughter

**Food:** Insects, suet

**Season:** Year-round

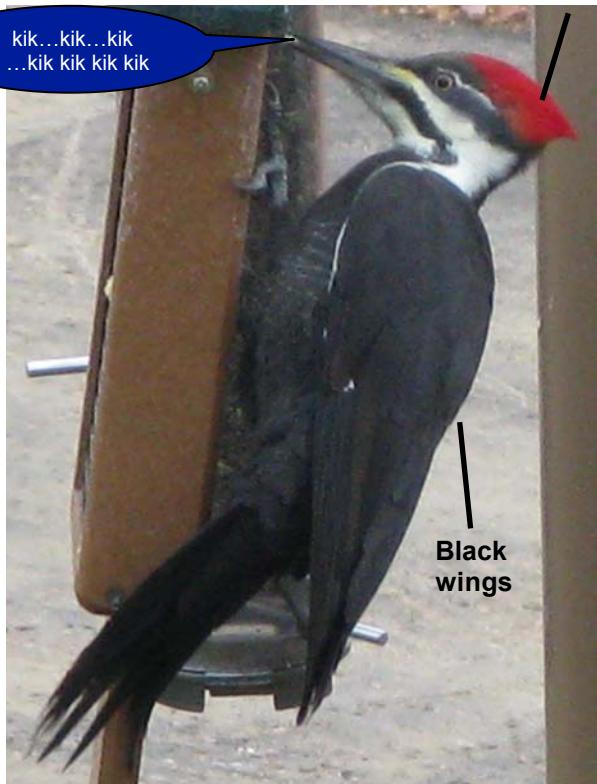
**Did You:**



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_



# Downy Woodpecker



**Habitat:** Forest. Commonly seen in trees and often visits suet feeders

**Size:** Sparrow to Robin size

**Look For:** All white belly with black and white-spotted wings; black spots on the tail; black stripe behind eyes; small black bill. The male downy has a red patch on its head

**Sound or Song:** Rapid whinny

**Food:** Insects, seeds

**Season:** Year-round

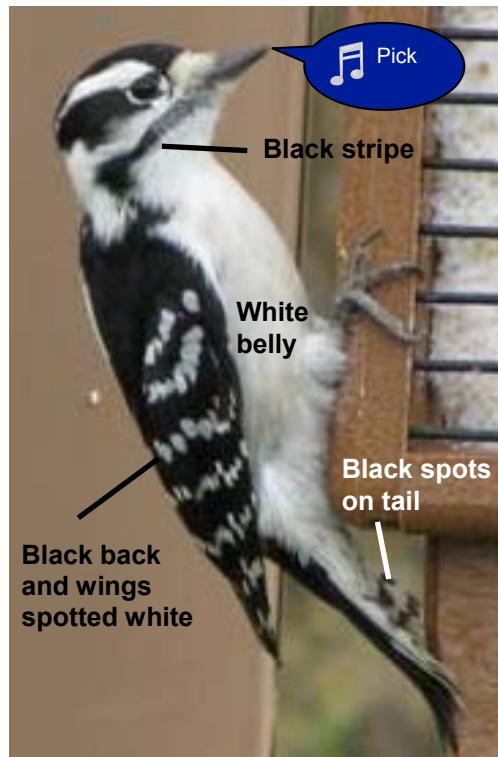
**Did You:**



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_



# Red-bellied Woodpecker

(often confused with the red-headed woodpecker)



**Habitat:** Forest. Commonly seen in trees and often visits suet feeders

**Size:** Robin size

**Look For:** Red head; black wings with many white spots (almost zebra-like stripes); breast has some red coloring; white rump

**Sound or Song:** Deep trill

**Food:** Insects, nuts, berries

**Season:** Year-round

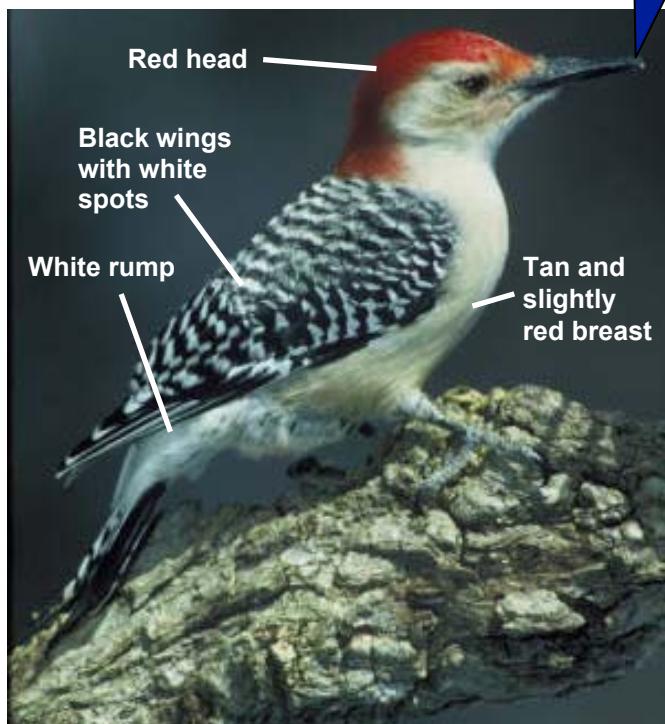


See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_

## Did You:



# Eastern Bluebird



**Habitat:** Prairie. Commonly seen in open fields with nearby trees.



**Size:** Sparrow size

**Look For:** Bright blue body and rusty or cinnamon colored neck

**Sound or Song:** Musical

**Food:** Insects, berries

**Season:** Late spring and summer

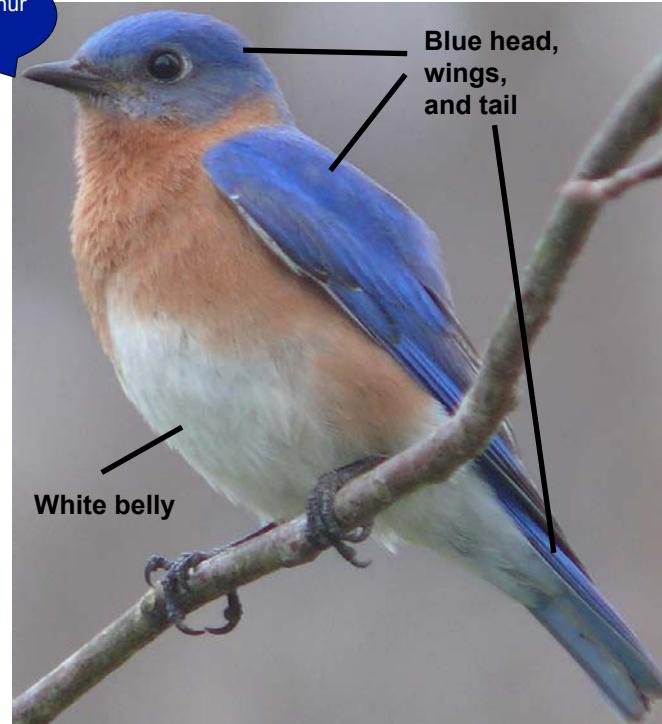


See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_

## Did You:



## Barn Swallow



**Habitat:** Prairie. Commonly seen in open to semi-open land like fields and marshes. Will nest on building ledges, with a mud built nest

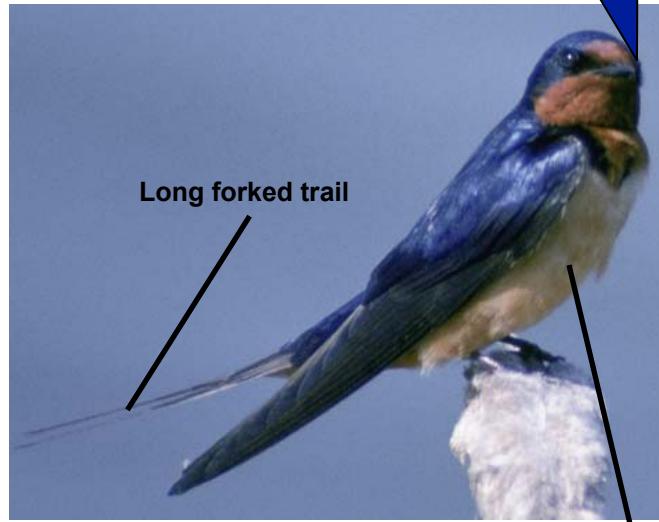
**Size:** Sparrow size

**Look For:** Blue black body with a rust color breast and belly

**Sound or Song:** Soft or anxious notes

**Food:** Beetles and flying insects

**Season:** Late spring to late summer/early fall



🎵 Twittering (rapid);  
tit-tit-tit-tit (rapid, short)

**Did You:**



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_

## White-breasted Nuthatch



**Habitat:** Forest. Commonly seen up-side-down hopping along trees. Common bird feeder visitor.

**Size:** Sparrow size

**Look For:** Sparrow size bird hopping head first up-side-down on sides of trees

**Sound or Song:** Rapid low whistled notes "wha, wha, wha"

**Food:** Seeds and suet

**Season:** Year-round

**Did You:**



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_



🎵 wha, wha,  
wha

White face  
and belly

# Killdeer



**Habitat:** Prairie. Commonly on the ground nesting in grassy areas. Upland shore bird, usually not near the water.

**Size:** Robin size

**Look For:** Two black bands around the neck; brown back and a white belly; rump appears reddish orange; performs a broken wing dance used to protect nestlings

**Sound or Song:** Warning call

**Food:** Insects

**Season:** Late spring to late summer/early fall

**Did You:**



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_



# Red-winged Blackbird



**Habitat:** Wetland. Commonly seen in marshy areas in flocks early spring & late fall

**Size:** Robin size

**Look For:** Red, orange, and yellow on the wing; shiny black body

**Sound or Song:** Loud check; gurgling trill

**Food:** seeds, grains, insects, spiders, and snails

**Season:** Spring through fall

**Did You:**



See It \_\_\_\_\_



Hear It \_\_\_\_\_

