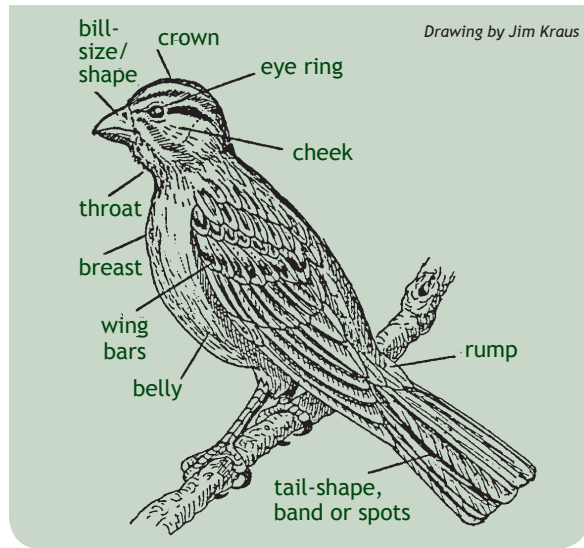


WHAT TO NOTICE ABOUT A BIRD



The following characteristics of a bird's appearance and behavior will help you to identify it. For some birds, you might need all of the clues for identification, while for others, one characteristic might give it away. The order in which these features are noted is not important, but try to remember the combination of features each bird displays.

Field marks are the physical aspects of a bird that are often visible during its normal activities. These include features such as body and bill shape, wing and rump coloration, tail bands, eye rings, and more. Most people notice the color of a bird first and, for a few birds such as the electric orange of the male Baltimore oriole, this might be all you will need. However, many birds share the same coloration. Many finches and sparrows are streaked brown, and additional field marks are needed for their identification.

Size - Comparing the size and shape of the bird you are looking at to the size of a bird you are familiar with may aid in identifying it. Is it smaller than a crow? More slender than a blackbird?

Silhouette - A bird's shape, specifically the shape of its head, wings or tail, may give clues to its identity.

Habits and Behavior - Observing how and where a bird interacts with its surroundings is a valuable identification tool. Does it eat insects or seeds? Does it feed in a tree or from the ground? Does it hover like a hummingbird or soar like a vulture? Answering questions such as these provides enjoyable lessons in natural history.

Habitat - Some birds are only found in certain habitats, so noting where the bird is found may help eliminate certain species. Is the bird in a coniferous or deciduous forest, open field or marsh? In treetops or on the ground?

Calls and Songs - Ornithologists recognize two categories of bird vocalization: calls and songs. Calls are generally brief sounds of only one or two notes, while a song is usually a rhythmic series of notes uttered in a recognizable pattern. Many birds have very distinctive songs and identification is possible without ever actually seeing them. Recordings of calls and songs are available from bookstores that sell field guides, on the Internet, or in the collections of many public libraries.

The only way to become proficient at birding is to practice. Birding may seem difficult at first, but with a little study you will be able to identify many birds with just a quick look or hearing a few notes of their song.

Top Books For Birders:

- **Birding Guide to West Virginia**
by The Brooks Bird Club of West Virginia, 1999.
- **West Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas**
by Albert R. Buckelew and George A. Hall, 1994.
- The National Audubon Society **Field Guide to North American Birds: East**, 1996.
- The **Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America**, by David Allen Sibley, 2003.
- **The National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America**, National Geographic Society, 1999.
- **The Crossley ID Guide: Eastern Birds**
by Richard Crossley
- **Peterson Field Guide to the Eastern Birds**
by Roger Tory Peterson, 1980.
- **WV DNR Educational brochures** - For The Birds... Feeding Birds in Your Backyard, Neotropical Migratory Birds of West Virginia, How To Attract Cavity Nesters and Birds of West Virginia Field Checklist.

Get More Involved!

The WVDNR Wildlife Diversity program encourages participation in several different activities:

- WV Breeding Bird Atlas
- Audubon Christmas Bird Counts
- WV Winter Bird Count
- Great Backyard Bird Count

For more information on all these programs, check out Birding in WV on the WVDNR website or call 304-637-0245.



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Get Started Bird Watching

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Wildlife Diversity Program
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Get Started Bird Watching



Cardinal

GET STARTED BIRD WATCHING

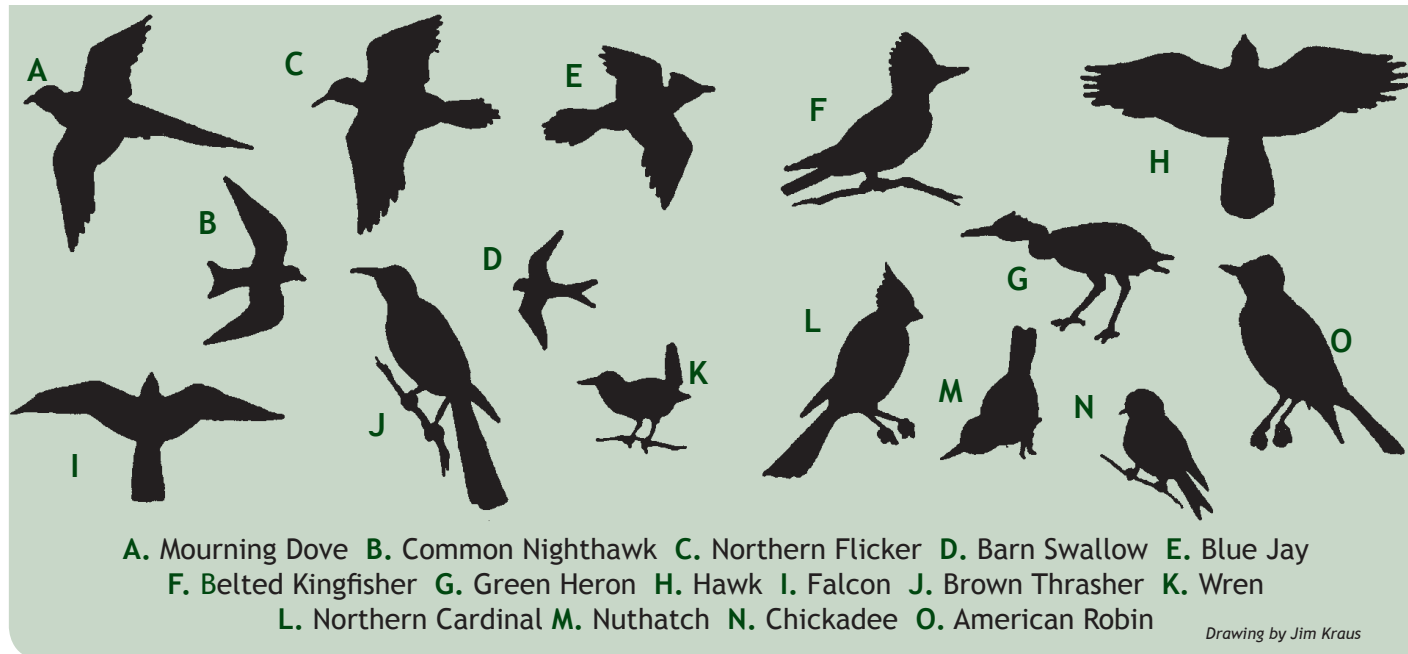
Would you like to become involved in an enjoyable and challenging outdoor activity? One that is relatively inexpensive and can be done just about anywhere at anytime. If all this sounds good to you, then welcome to the hobby of bird watching, or "birding" as it is often called.

West Virginia abounds in birdlife. Whether it is our state bird, the cardinal, at a backyard feeder or a red-tailed hawk soaring magnificently above the mountains, birds have a way of capturing our attention and brightening our lives. Getting started in bird watching is easy, and once started, birding will provide a lifetime of fascination and enjoyment.

EQUIPMENT

The following equipment is suggested for making the most of your birding experiences:

Field Identification Guide - A good bird identification guide will be your most valuable piece of equipment. These books give details on color and plumage patterns and all the little "tricks" to identify each species. Field guides are made small enough to carry in the field for immediate reference. Any bookstore should have several guides from which to choose.



Binoculars - These are desirable but by no means required. A great deal can be learned without them, but binoculars enable us to see field marks that we often otherwise miss. You also will have more fun seeing wild birds "close up." The ideal binoculars should be compact, light and powerful enough to pick up the small details. Many people use 7x35 glasses (meaning the subject is magnified 7 times and the diameter of the lens is 35mm), 8x40 binoculars or a spotting scope, but the choice is up to you. Just make sure they are of good enough quality to prevent eye strain. Larger binoculars, like 10 x 50, can be too heavy to hold steadily without practice.

Notebook and Bird List - Again, these are not necessary, but notes and sketches can aid you and serve as reminders for things you've learned. Notebooks can be used to record the markings

or unusual behavior of a bird you see. Also, remembering what bird you observed is much easier when written down. There are a variety of bird lists you can keep including a life list, West Virginia list and a daily list. Contact the Wildlife Diversity Program for a checklist of West Virginia birds or download it from our website. <http://www.wvdnr.gov/Publications/PDFFiles/bird%20checklist2.pdf>



IN THE FIELD

Birding can be done in your backyard, in a forest, along the water's edge or in almost any area that satisfies some of the basic life requirements of birds. Each different habitat will provide interesting birds. The following suggestions should help you see more birds anywhere you go:

Season - The spring breeding season is a great time of the year to watch birds! They are brightly colored, actively singing and busy building nests and caring for young. In addition, earlier in spring there is less foliage on trees and shrubs, and it is easier to spot residents and migrants alike. Observing birds year-round helps you notice these changes and see more species.

Time of Day - The time between sun-up and mid-morning is usually the best time to look for birds. In winter the warmest part of the day is best.

Visit Different Habitats - Birds are usually more numerous along the edges of different habitat types. Edges of fields, streams, lakes, woods and roads are all excellent places. Different types of habitats, such as wetlands vs. spruce forest, will yield different varieties of birds.

Go With an Experienced Bird Watcher - Someone who knows birds can be of great help. If no such person is available, go anyway. Membership in local bird clubs will put you in touch with experienced birders. Examples of the more established bird clubs include the Brooks Bird Club and local Audubon chapters throughout the state.