

Bird Watching Basics

Bird Watching Basics

Tools Needed:

- Binoculars/Spotting Scope
- Bird Identification Guide
- Notebook and Pencil
- Camera
- Keen eyes and ears

Boreal Chickadee



Common Yellowthroat



Bird Watching Basics

4 Factors Used to Identify Birds

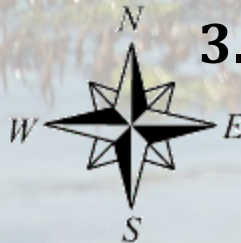
1. Sight



2. Sound



**3. Habitat/
Location**



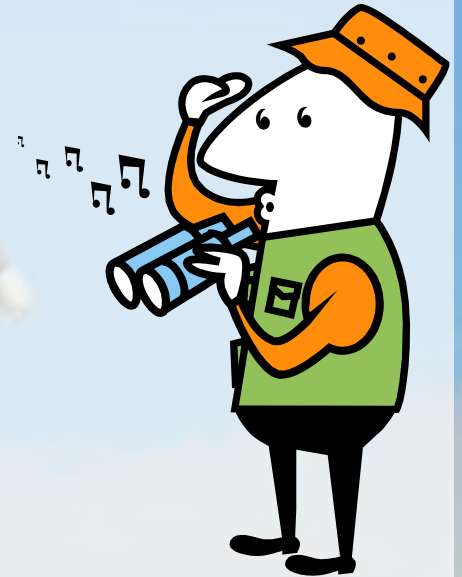
**4. Time of
Day/Year**



Bird Watching Basics

Sight

- Color
- Shape
- Size
- Behavior



Bird Watching Basics

Sight

- Color (field markings)
- Shape
 - Long, thin, short, wide
 - Legs, bill, tail,
 - Distinguishing features (tuffs)
- Size
 - In relation to other birds
 - Is it bigger or smaller
- Behavior
 - Flight pattern
 - Feeding pattern
 - Habits



• Color (field markings - patterns)

- Overall color (dull or brightly colored)
 - Why are they dull colored?
 - Why are brightly colored?
- Eye lines/rings, eye color, wing stripes, trail stripes, etc...



striped



streaked



capped



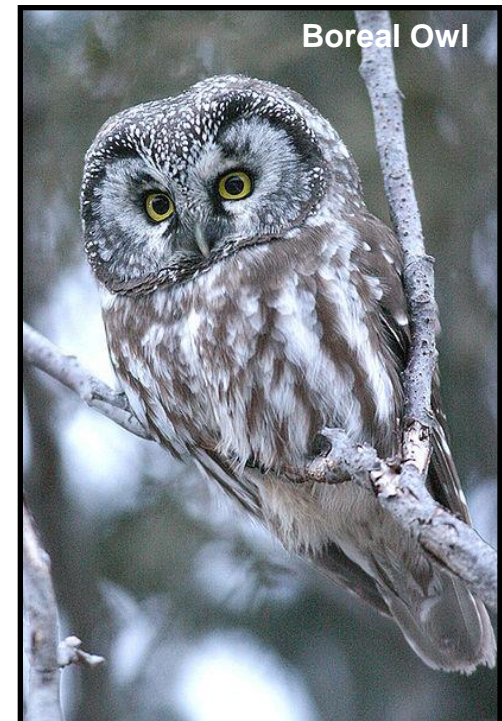
crested



American Redstart



Wood Duck



Boreal Owl





• Shape – Become familiar with silhouettes

- Long, thin, short, wide
- Legs, bill, tail,
- Distinguishing features (tuffs)

Bills



cone-shaped

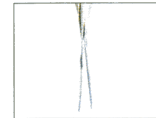


needlelike



hooked

Tails



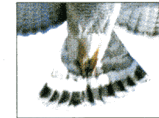
forked



rounded



fan-shaped



wedge-shaped



pointed



notched



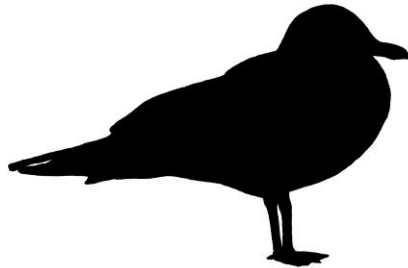
square



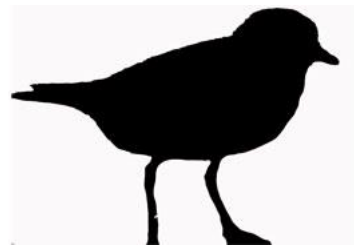
short



long



Great Blue Heron



Piping Plover



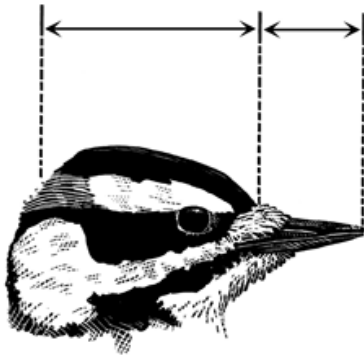
Blue Jay



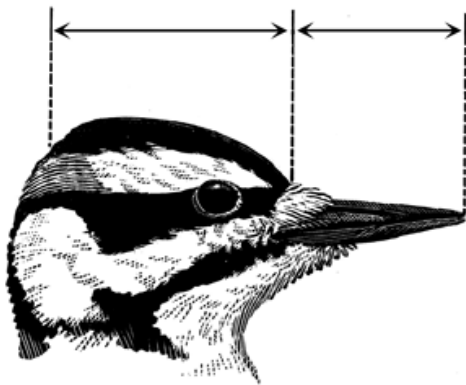
American Robin

• Size

- In relation to other birds (birds you know)
 - Is it bigger, smaller or the same size?
- Judge against birds in the same field of view
- Measure it against itself



Downy Woodpecker



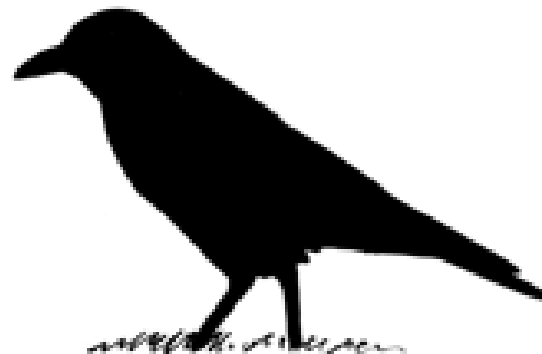
Hairy Woodpecker



House Sparrow



American Robin



American Crow



Cedar Waxwing



Blue Jay

- Behavior – There's what birds wear, and then there's how birds wear it. A bird's attitude goes a long way in identification.

- Posture
- Movement
- Feeding Style/behavior
- Flight pattern
- Flocking



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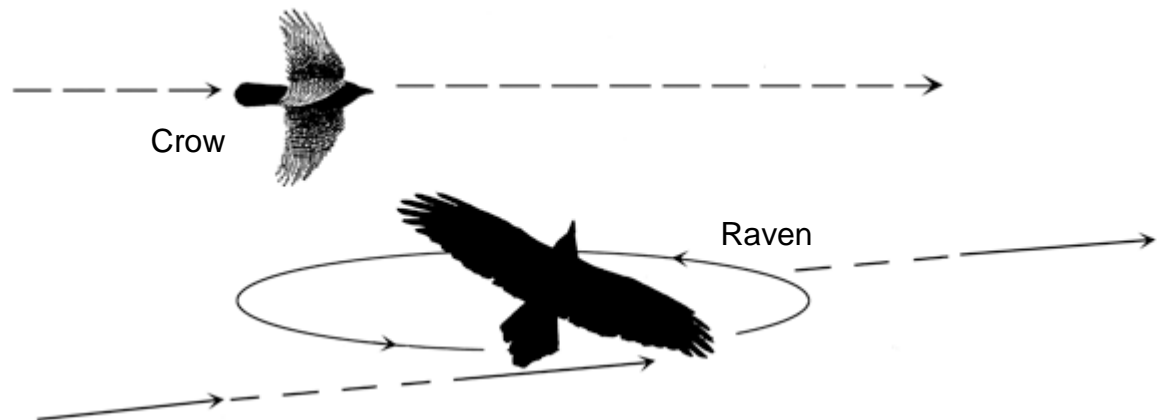
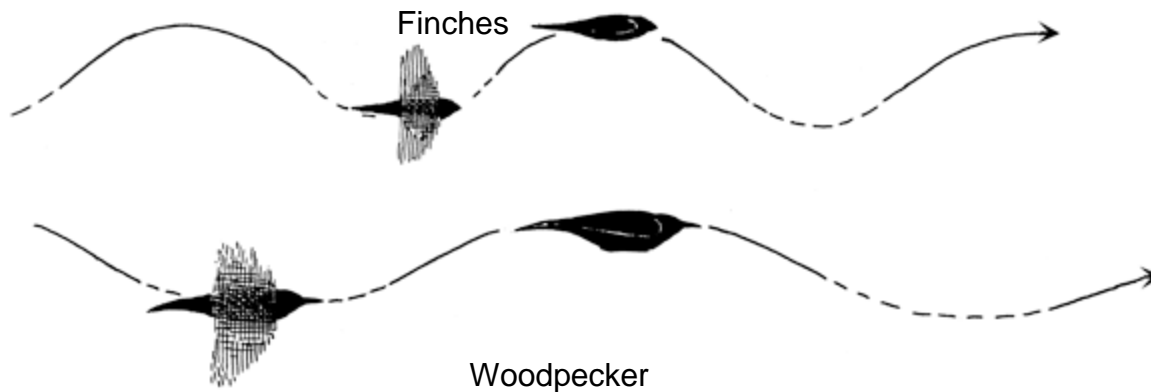
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Bird Watching Basics

Sound

- It is as unique as a fingerprint
- Primarily used for identifying songbirds
- Challenging...but worth learning
- Eliminate uncertainty

Five tips:

1. Watch and Listen
2. Learn from an Expert
3. Listen to recordings
4. Say it to yourself
5. Details, details, details



Sounds

Songs and calls:

Song: long, complex series of notes that are musical (vocal presentations of males in courtship, establish territory)

Call: a single note or series of notes that isn't musical (keeping members in contact – flight, contact, threat, alarm, feeding and begging calls)



Other sounds (not caused by singing):

Examples:

- Ruffed Grouse cupping his wings making a drumming sound (courtship)
- Wilson's Snipe dives through the air, the feathers on its wings make a winnowing sound (courtship)
- Woodpecker drums on a tree to produce a song that only members of the same species recognize (courtship and declare territory)

Sounds



Cheeseburger-cheeseburger-cheeseburger-
chickadee, dee, dee, dee

Tee-tee-tew, tee-tee-tew



Oh Canada, Canada, Canada



Bird Watching Basics

Habitat/Location



A habitat is a bird's home, and many birds are choosy. Narrow down your list By keeping in mind where you are.



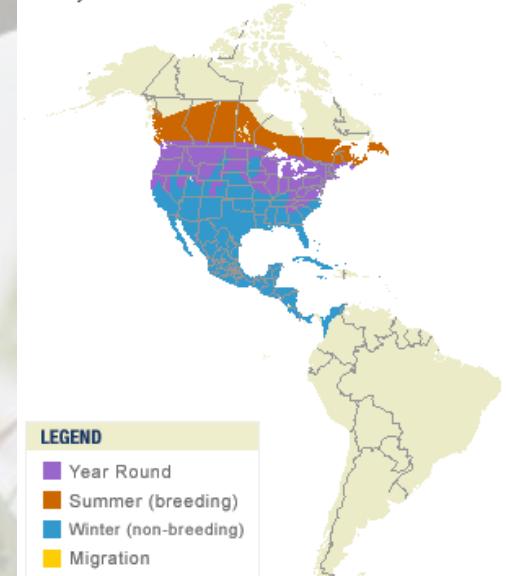
- Birding by probability

- What habitat are you in?
- What is the likelihood of seeing particular species?

- Range maps

- Year round
- Summer
- Winter
- Migration

Cedar Waxwing
Bombycilla cedrorum



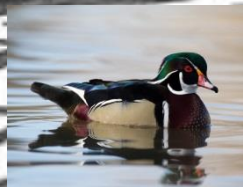
Habitat/Location

Northern Harrier



Red-Winged Blackbird

Swamp Sparrow



Wood Duck



Common Yellowthroat

Habitat/Location – Boreal Forest

Hairy Woodpecker



Ruffed Grouse



Boreal Owl



Habitat/Location – Wetlands

Canada Goose



American Bittern



Wood Duck



Habitat/Location – Coastal



Common Eider



Osprey



Piping Plover





Which of these birds will you NOT see??

Bird Watching Basics

Time of Day/Year

Just as humans, birds have daily patterns for feeding, roosting and other activities.

Best times of the Day

- **Feeding:** Birds spend most of their time foraging. Active times are early in the morning as the sun rises (after a long night) and late in the evening (storing energy for the night).
- **Singing:** During the spring and summer birds are establishing territories and attracting mates. They frequently sing in the early morning when sounds carry further and ambient noises are less.
- **Sunning:** Birds often spread out during full sunlight (mid-afternoon) and expose their plumage.
- **Drinking:** Birds often visit bird baths and other water sources in the heat of the day.

Bird Watching Basics

Time of Day/Year

There are certain times of the year that are more productive for seeing a wide range of species.

Best times of the Year

- **Migration:** Spring and fall migration are two of the best times to see many birds. Some birds may flock together in large groups, making them easier to see.
- **Breeding Season:** When birds breed they become more secluded, but they have brighter colors and active behavior, claiming territories and attract mates, making them easier to identify.
- **Winter Irruptions:** While most birds migrate in the winter, some northern birds move south that may provide opportunity to see unusual species (ex: snowy owls, northern raptors)

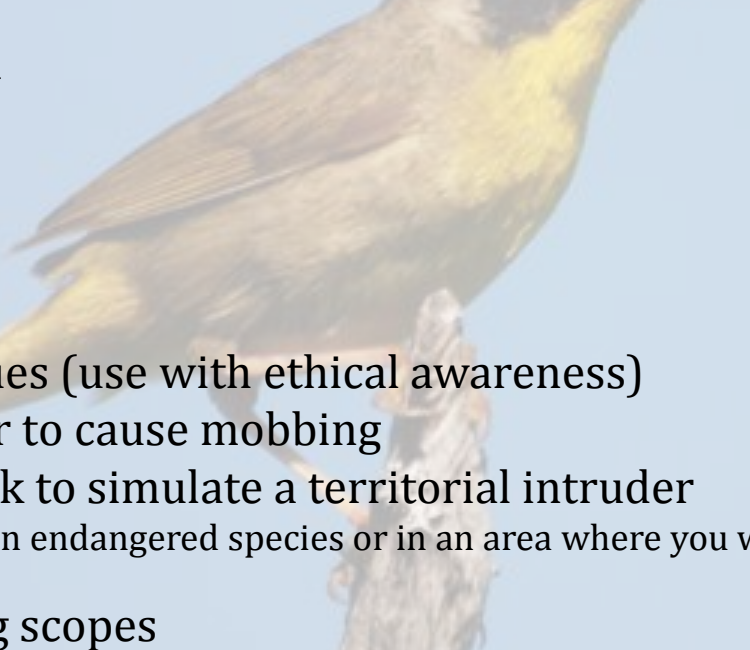
Ask yourself questions:

- What are some distinguishing features?
- What habitat is the bird in?
- How big is the bird (relate it to something that you know....like a robin or a common duck)?
- How is the bird sitting (vertical or horizontal)?
- How is the bird behaving (soaring, perching, hopping in the undergrowth)?
- What is the bird eating (flies, seeds, plants in the water or invertebrates in mud)?
- If the bird is not eating, what shape is its bill (an indication of food preference)?

***Be logical:** What could it possibly **BE**? What could it definitely **NOT BE**?*

Bird Watching Basics

Getting Close to Birds

- Dress in drab clothing
 - Walk slowly and quietly
 - Sit quietly
 - Bird blinds
 - Feeders
 - 'Pishing'
 - More intrusive techniques (use with ethical awareness)
 - Imitate a predator to cause mobbing
 - Song/call playback to simulate a territorial intruder
 - Never do this to an endangered species or in an area where you will disturb or attract other birds.
 - Use binoculars/spotting scopes
- 
- A yellowthroat bird is perched on a thin, light-colored branch. The bird has a bright yellow throat and breast, with a dark brown cap and back. It is facing right, looking slightly upwards. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue sky.

Bird Watching Basics

- www.allaboutbirds.org
- www.birds.com
- www.ebird.org
- www.audubon.org
 - Christmas Bird Counts
 - Great Backyard Bird Count
 - Project Feederwatch
- Google group NF.BIRDS
- Dendroica
- Create your own community birding group (youth and adult)
- Invite birding experts to conduct birding workshops

- Build/buy a bird feeder and practice identifying (start small – it is better to id 1 bird with certainty, then id 10 without certainty)
- Visit local bird sanctuaries
 - Baccalieu Island (Leach's Storm Petrels, Atlantic Puffin)
 - Cape St. Mary's (Gannet's)
 - Funk Island (Common Murres)
 - Gannet Islands (Razorbill, Atlantic Puffin)
 - Hare Bay (Common Eider)
 - Witless Bay (Black-legged Kittiwakes, Atlantic Puffins, Murres, Storm Petrels)

Dendroica

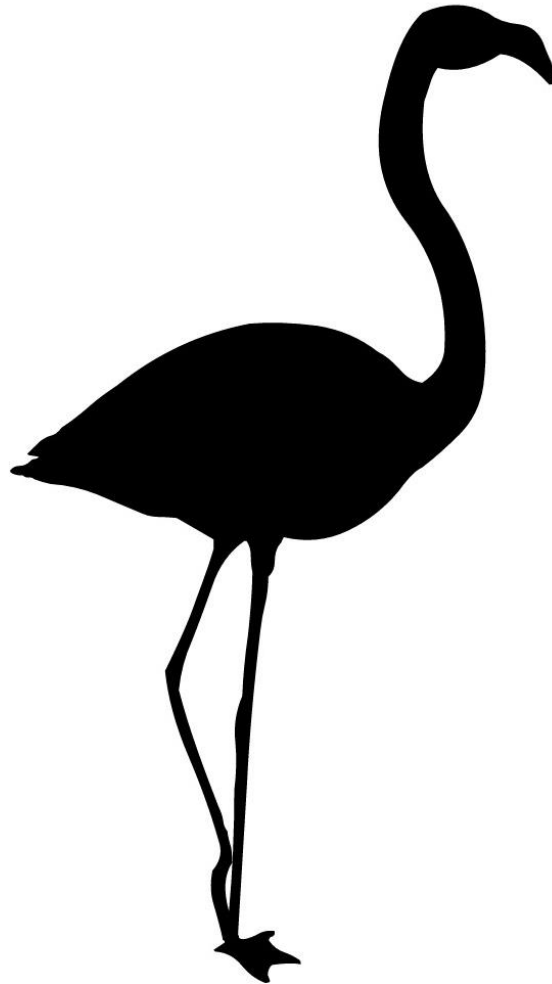
<http://www.natureinstruct.org/dendroica/>

The screenshot shows the Dendroica website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the 'Home' link on the left and a 'Français' link on the right. Below this, a header section features logos for the Canadian government (Environment Canada), CONABIO (Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad), and the USGS (science for a changing world). The main title 'DENDROICA' is prominently displayed in the center, followed by the subtitle 'An aid to identifying North American birds'. Below the title, three photographs of Dendroica birds are shown. The interface is divided into two main sections: 'Sign in to use all features' and 'Guest Version'. The 'Sign in' section includes buttons for 'First-time users Register' and 'Returning users Sign In', along with a link to 'Learn more about Dendroica'. The 'Guest Version' section includes a 'Choose country to begin:' prompt with buttons for 'Canada', 'U.S.A.', and 'Mexico'. On the left side of the page, a sidebar contains links for 'Dendroica', 'About Dendroica', 'Acknowledgements', 'Photo Credits', 'Recording Credits', and 'Sign In'. On the right side, there are two circular logos: the 'Breeding Bird Survey' logo on the left and the 'PARTNERS IN FLIGHT' logo on the right. At the bottom center, there is a link for 'Acknowledgements'.

- A new online educational tool to help increase bird ID skills
- Browse bird images, songs, and calls
- Test your knowledge through quizzes

Quiz

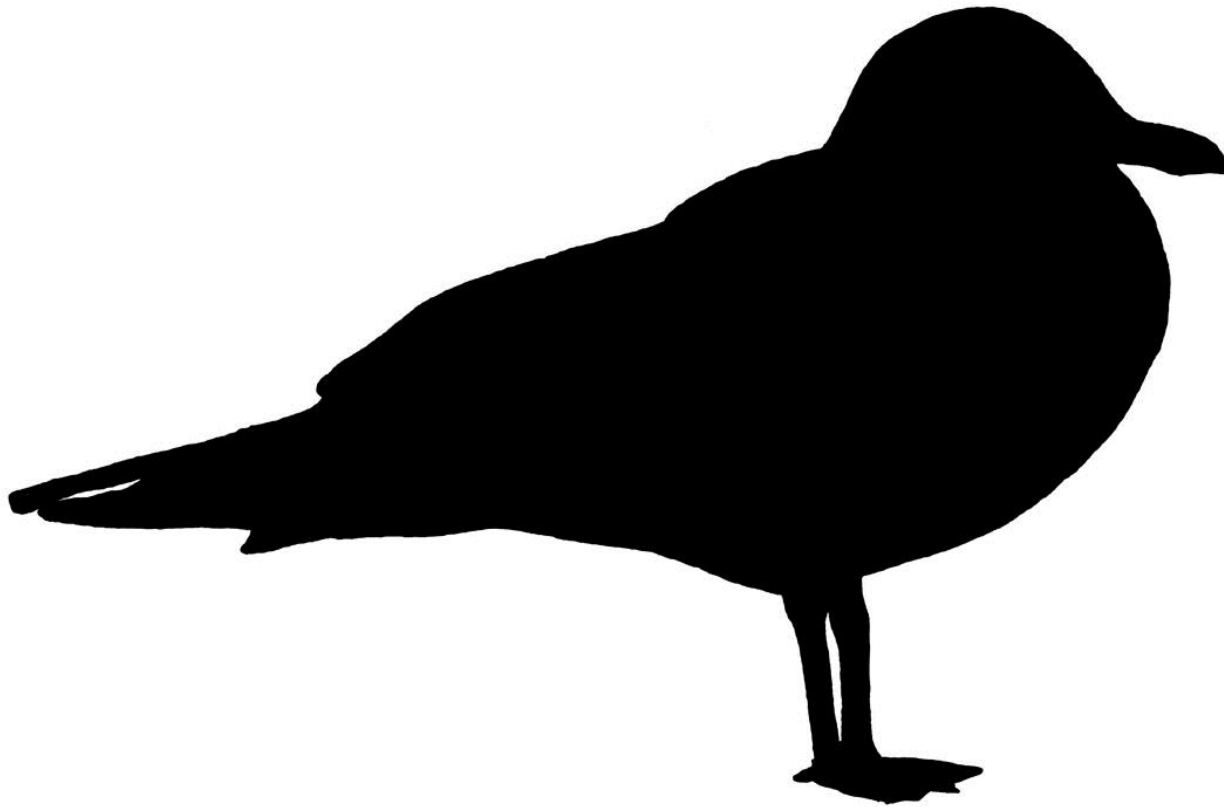
Flamingo



Hummingbird



Herring Gull



Cormorant



Green-winged Teal



Canada Geese



Osprey



Black-capped Chickadee



White-throated Sparrow



American Black Duck



Great Job!!!