

Bird Watching Journal



Introduction

There are over 300 species of birds in Wisconsin. Learn where to look for birds in your neighborhood and how to identify them - how many can you spot?

Think About This

What characteristics can help identify a bird?

Materials

- Notebook
- Pencil
- A smartphone or tablet (optional)

Where to Find Birds

The first step to finding birds is to pay attention - birds are everywhere!

- Take a walk, watch, and listen closely. Birds are often heard before seen.
- Pay special attention to places where birds could find food and water like ponds, trees, and flowers.
- Don't forget to look up! Many birds like to perch on tall objects like powerlines to get a good view of the ground.

If you can't observe birds from home or want to see more types of birds, check out bird cams online! Bird cams provide a virtual window into the habitats of birds and often provide a close up and personal view that would be nearly impossible to get in nature. Check out these bird cams to see birds all over the world!

- <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/> The Cornell Ornithology Lab - live cams of both specific birds in their nests and birdfeeders where many birds stop to eat.
- <https://www.audubon.org/birdcams> The National Audubon Society - live streams of birds in nests and at birdfeeders all over North America.
- <https://explore.org/livecams/birds/> Explore.org - live cams of animals, including birds of all kinds. Select a specific bird to see a livestream of its nest or browse through bird streams from all over the world.

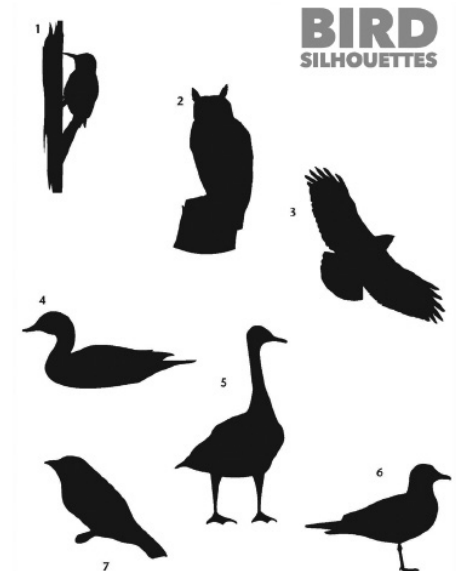
How to Identify Birds:

The first step in identifying a bird is to find its group. While there are many families of birds, these families fall into seven basic groups. The two characteristics to focus on are: Shape and Size.

SHAPE

Match the bird's shape to the most similar silhouette of common birds below:

1. Woodpecker
2. Owl
3. Hawk
4. Duck
5. Goose
6. Gull
7. Sparrow



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SIZE

Compare the bird's size to size of other familiar birds. Is it smaller than a pigeon? Is it as big as a crow? Also note the size of the bird's features, such as its bill, legs, wings, and tail.

The next step is to look at things that might be special to that bird or different from a bird like it.

COLOR

Start with the overall color pattern on the body. Where it is light and where it is dark colored? Look at the colors on the head, wings, and tail. Are there dull or bright colors? Are there spots or streaks?

BEHAVIOR

Look at the bird's posture. Is the body more horizontal or vertical when still? What does the bird do when it moves? Does it hop or walk? Does it move in quick spurts or does it move slowly? When in flight, does it flap its wings or glide more often?

HABITAT

Note where are you observing the bird; a forest, near or on water, shrubs, grasslands, or urban settings. Watch the bird's behavior in its habitat.

Looking up the bird you think it may be in a field guide will confirm if it is found in that habitat at that time of year, and if your other observations match. Here are some online field guides to use:

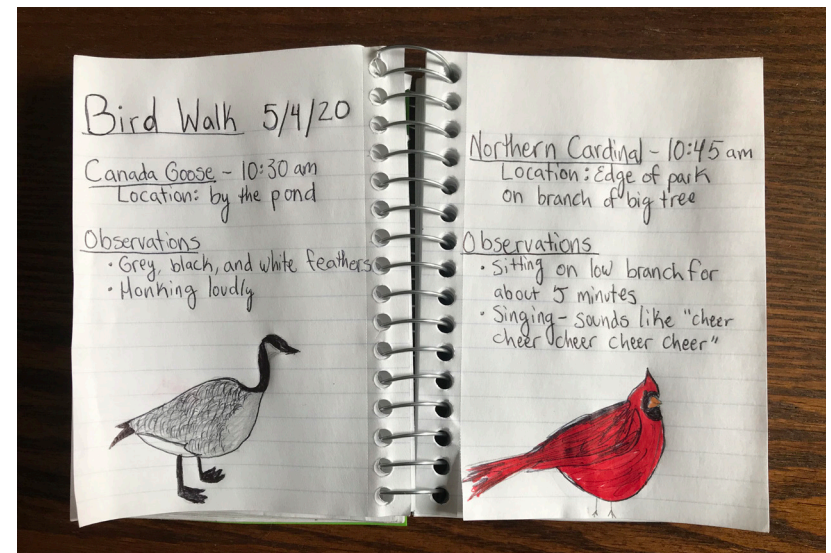
- **Audubon Guide to North American Birds** (<https://www.audubon.org/bird-guide>) allows you to search by region and/or family. The app version (<https://www.audubon.org/app>) includes a Bird ID tool that allows you to enter characteristics to help identify a bird.

- **All About Birds Bird Guide** (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/>) allows you to search by family or shape.
- **The Merlin Bird ID** app (<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>) gives users two options for identifying a bird: by answering five questions about it or by uploading a photo of it.

How to Record Your Observations

MAKE A BIRD JOURNAL

After you identify a bird, record your observations. One record-keeping option is a birding journal. Use a notebook or make your own from loose paper stapled together. Make a sketch of your bird and record details such as type of bird, date, time, location, and features used to help identify it.



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USE AN APP

An app lets you keep track of your own observations, submit your bird sightings, and contribute to scientific research, education, and conservation.

- **eBird** (<https://ebird.org>) allows you to keep track of the birds you see and share your observations in a global online database.
- **iNaturalist** (<https://www.inaturalist.org>) allows you to submit photos you take of birds, as well as other organisms, and share with over 400,000 scientists and naturalists.

If you sign up for **iNaturalist**, your bird observations can be used to aid the Great Lakes Bioblitz, which in 2020 runs through May 20. A bioblitz is a citizen science project that focuses on finding and identifying as many living organisms as possible in a specific area over a specific time. To participate, search for “Great Lakes Bioblitz” and “Wisconsin Bioblitz” in the “Projects” menu and start submitting your observations.

Of course, you don’t need a yard to see birds. Just take a walk around your neighborhood and keep your eyes and ears open. Happy birding!

What birds did you spot in your neighborhood?
 Let us know at

AtHome@discoveryworld.org

