

Beginning Birdwatching – Where to Start?

Dave Moore, OFNC, redstart@bell.net

Birding binoculars: in general, 7X or 8X, 40-50mm, e.g. 7X42 or 8X50

<http://www.birdwatching.com/optics/binoculars1.html>

Some sources:

Focus Scientific, Carling Avenue

Wild Birds Unlimited, Blue Heron Mall, Bank Street

Mountain Equipment Co-op

Canadian Tire

many others

Bird Field Guides: Drawings VS Photos

Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America

Sibley Guide to Birds [all of North America]

National Geographic Field Guide

Peterson Field Guide, Eastern Birds

Audubon Field Guide

Golden Guide

Kaufmann Guide

R.O.M.

Special Books:

Nature and Natural History in the Ottawa Area – OFNC [Dan Brunton]

Birder's Handbook - Ehrlich, Dobkin & Wheye

The Bird Almanac – David M. Bird

A Bird-Finding Guide to Canada – J.C. Finlay, editor

Peterson's Guide – Warblers & Hawks

Various Pelée guides to warblers, sparrows and hawks

CDs & Software:

Peterson Field Guides:

 Birding by Ear

 Bird Songs

Monty Brigham's Birds of Canada

Thayer Birding Software

Cornell Birds of North America

Databases:

IGoTerra

Birdbase

eBird

and many others

See <http://www.birdwatching.com/index.html> for lots more including Videos

Organizations:

OFNC: Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club; 613-722-3050 <http://www.ofnc.ca/>

 Bird hotline: 613-860-9000

COO: Club des Ornithologues de l'Outaouais; <http://www.coo.qc.ca/>

OFO: Ontario Field Ornithologists; <http://www.ofo.ca/>

 OFO listserv "Ontbirds"

 See OFO website for a list of Ontario birding clubs.

Canadian Museum of Nature – new bird exhibit [Metcalf & McLeod]

Websites: where to bird locally

<http://www.ofnc.ca/birding/wheretogo/index.html>

<http://www.neilyworld.com/>

<http://www.camacdonald.com/birding/birdcanada.htm>

Some good local areas include the Britannia Conservation Area [see OFNC above} and most of the NCC trails around Ottawa.

<http://ncc-ccn.gc.ca/places-to-visit/greenbelt>

Beginner Birdwatching courses and trips:

Free

OFNC - for members only, OFNC members can bring a guest to the free trips if space is available.

COO – Quebec side

OFO – mainly south-western Ontario, a few trips to eastern Ontario.

Some trips may have a fee if a bus trip is involved, e.g. the OFNC trips to Point Pelee and Presqu'île Provincial Parks.

\$\$\$

Tony Beck: <http://www3.sympatico.ca/beck.tony/events.htm>

Bruce Di Labio: <http://www.dilabiobirding.ca/>

Checklists etc:

Local - OFNC - Fletcher Wildlife Garden

Ontario - OFO – see website.

Birdwatching & Photography Code of Conduct:

<http://www.naturephotographers.net/codeofconduct.html>

Birdwatching for Kids

General Information about Birds

Birds belong to the Class Aves in the Kingdom Animalia. Birds are the only animals on earth that have feathers and every animal on earth that has feathers is a bird. Other characteristics of birds include: forelimbs modified into wings, lack of teeth, a bill, a four chambered heart, eggs with hard shells, and the furculum (wishbone) among others.

Scientists have divided the Class Aves into 30 orders. Each order is subdivided into families of related genera and species. Scientists group birds together by searching for common structural characteristics of their anatomy and similarities in their genetic material.

There are over 9,000 species of birds worldwide. Their ability to fly has enabled birds to inhabit nearly every part of the Earth - from the oceans and frozen polar zones to steaming rain forests and barren deserts.

Birds are incredibly diverse in size, color, and lifestyles. They range in size from the 2.5 inch, 0.08 ounce Bee Hummingbird to the Andean Condor with a 10 foot wingspan. Arctic Terns fly 15 to 20,000 miles each year as they migrate from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back! Other birds such as ostriches, rheas, emus, kiwis, and penguins are flightless and depend on running, camouflage, or isolation for protection from predators.

Things to do:

Build a bird feeder;

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/birdfeeders/pinecone-feeder.shtml>

Build a bird box;

<http://www.wikihow.com/Build-a-Birdhouse>

Add a bird bath to your yard;

http://www.backyardwildbirds.com/Bird-Baths_c_77.html

Make a scrap book / log book;

Make a list of the birds you see at your feeder or bird bath. What did they do – how did they feed? How did they react to other birds? Did they sing? What did they sound like?

Listening to Birds

Common birds: Crow, Blue Jay, Robin, Starling, Downy Woodpecker, Cardinal, House Sparrow, Chickadee, Nuthatch, Flicker, Canada Goose, Mallard, Gull, Goldfinch, Mourning Dove,

Looking at Birds

What to look for;

Feathers [Colour] -Feathers perform a number of functions for a bird:

- 1) They provide insulation, this is very important in a warm blooded animal (body temperature of most birds is maintained at around 40C);
- 2) Feathers allow for flight;
- 3) Feathers control what a bird looks like by supplying the bird with shape and colours. Colours in birds are used for camouflage and display.

Does it have wing bars, spots, eye lines, eye rings, etc?

Size – compare a new bird to one you know – was it bigger than a sparrow? Was it smaller or larger than a Robin?

Seven Sizes:

very small, sparrow-sized, robin-sized, pigeon-sized, crow-sized, goose-sized, and very large.

Beaks and Feet – see next pages

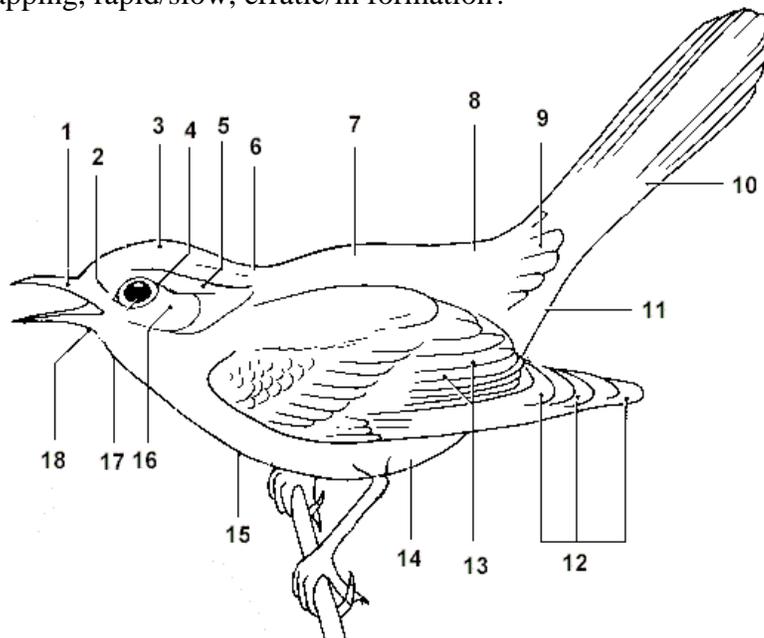
Habitat – where was the bird when you saw it? There are special environments, distinctive vegetation, landforms, and specific climates that birds inhabit. Some birds can use a wide variety of habitats and some birds have a very specific habitat? For example woodpeckers often forage on and nest in large standing dead trees (snags). You would not expect to see a woodpecker probing for insects on the beach.

Behaviour – What was it doing?

In water - how did it swim, dive, land?

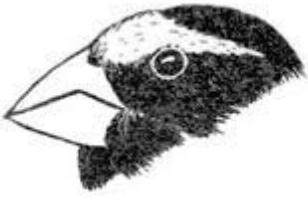
On land - was it head bobbing, wing flashing, walking/running?

In flight - was it soaring, flapping, rapid/slow, erratic/in formation?



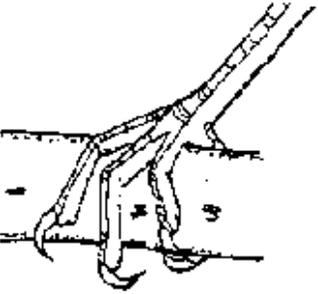
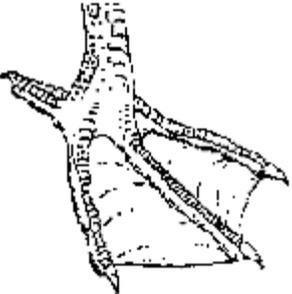
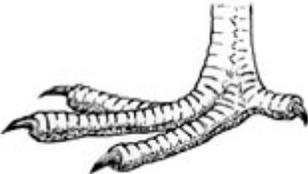
Beak

http://fsc.fernbank.edu/birding/bird_beaks.htm

	<p>A cone shaped bill is found in many birds such as finches and grosbeaks. It is a strong beak used for cracking seeds.</p>
	<p>Thin, slender, pointed beaks are found mainly in insect eaters. They are used to pick insects off leaves, twigs, and bark. This warbler is a good example.</p>
	<p>Woodpeckers have strong beaks which taper to the tip, forming a chisel for pecking holes in trees for food or nests. Most feed on insects which live under the bark.</p>
	<p>Hummingbirds have long, tubular bills that resemble straws, which they use to sip nectar from flowers.</p>
	<p>Mergansers, specialized for eating fish, have sharp tooth-like structures on the edge of the bill to hold fish tightly.</p>
	<p>Hawks, owls, and other birds of prey which catch and kill live prey have sharp, "hooked" beaks. These are used to bite the skull or neck and also to tear the body into pieces small enough to swallow.</p>
	<p>The edges of a Mallard's bill are fringed to strain plants, seeds, and small animals from mud and water.</p>
	<p>Beaks which are flat and wide at the base are found in birds which catch insects in flight, such as flycatchers. These birds also often have whiskers at the corners of the mouth, which effectively widens the mouth opening, allowing more effective capture of prey.</p>

Feet

http://fsc.fernbank.edu/Birding/bird_feet.htm

	<p>SONG BIRDS or PERCHING BIRDS (warblers, thrushes, wrens, etc.) have independent, flexible toes, with one pointing backwards, ideal for grasping perches. Why don't perching birds fall out of trees when they sleep? When perching birds sit, a tendon on the backside of the ankle automatically flexes locking their toes around the branch. With feet locked, sleeping birds don't fall. As the bird stands up its feet release.</p>
	<p>WOODPECKERS have two toes pointing forwards and two backwards; for climbing up, down, and sideways on tree trunks.</p>
	<p>WATER BIRDS such as ducks have webbing between their toes for swimming. GULLS also have feet similar to these so they don't sink while walking in the soft sand or mud near the water's edge.</p>
	<p>WADING BIRDS. The long toes of herons, which spreads the bird's weight over a large surface area, facilitates walking on soft surfaces near the water's edge (where wading birds like to eat).</p>
	<p>RAPTORS such as hawks, eagles, and owls use large claws (called talons) to capture, kill, and carry prey with their feet.</p>
	<p>Pheasants and chickens use their strong feet to scratch the dirt and leaf litter to uncover seeds and insects.</p>