ARKANSAS
Backyard Birds
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On the cover The photographers at Maslowski Productions spotted this colorful northern cardinal perched on a snow-covered holly during a winter day.
Arkansas Backyard Birds

**Hummingbirds**
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird .................................................. 8

**Chickadees, nuthatches, wrens and allies**
- Tufted Titmouse ................................................................. 9
- Carolina Chickadee ............................................................. 10
- White-breasted Nuthatch ..................................................... 11
- Brown Creeper ................................................................. 12
- Carolina Wren ................................................................. 13

**Warblers and kinglets**
- Yellow-rumped Warbler ..................................................... 14
- Pine Warbler ................................................................. 15
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet ...................................................... 16

**Sparrows and finches**
- Eastern Towhee ............................................................... 17
- Chipping Sparrow ........................................................... 18
- White-throated Sparrow .................................................. 19
- White-crowned Sparrow .................................................. 20
- Dark-eyed Junco ............................................................ 21
- House Sparrow ............................................................. 22
- House Finch ................................................................. 23
- American Goldfinch .......................................................... 24

**Flycatchers**
- Eastern Phoebe ............................................................... 25

**Tanagers, cardinals and buntings**
- Summer Tanager ............................................................. 26
- Northern Cardinal ........................................................... 27
- Indigo Bunting .............................................................. 28
- Painted Bunting ............................................................. 29
Thrushes, mimics and waxwings

Eastern Bluebird ........................................... 30
American Robin ............................................. 31
Northern Mockingbird ................................. 32
Brown Thrasher ............................................ 33
Cedar Waxwing ............................................. 34

Swallows and swifts

Purple Martin ............................................... 35
Barn Swallow ............................................... 36
Chimney Swift ............................................... 37

Woodpeckers

Red-bellied Woodpecker ................................. 38
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker ............................... 39
Downy Woodpecker ....................................... 40
Hairy Woodpecker ........................................ 41
Northern Flicker ........................................... 42
Pileated Woodpecker ..................................... 43

Cowbirds, grackles and starlings

Brown-headed Cowbird ................................. 44
Common Grackle .......................................... 45
European Starling ......................................... 46

Jays and crows

Blue Jay ....................................................... 47
American Crow ............................................. 48

Doves and owls

Mourning Dove ............................................. 49
Barred Owl ................................................... 50
Eastern Screech-owl ..................................... 51
INTRODUCTION

Birds are an incredibly diverse group of wildlife and are represented by more than 10,000 species worldwide. More than 900 of these species have been sighted in the United States and Canada, and more than 380 have been documented in The Natural State.

This guide is intended to help you identify some of the birds you will most likely see in your back yard or near your feeders. Each bird’s profile includes its common and scientific name, the species’ average size from the tip of the bill to the tip of the tail and its description, along with a photograph. Species where the male and female look markedly different have two photographs. We’ve listed the time of year the bird resides in Arkansas. There also is a description of the species’ song or call, since many people enjoy listening to birds as much as watching them. And, in case you’re lucky enough to have a feathered friend nesting in your yard, we’ve included nest descriptions to identify your new neighbors.
Identifying Birds

Two tools every beginning bird watcher should have are a field guide, such as this one, and a pair of binoculars. Binoculars can help you see birds with much more detail without the need to sneak up on them. A decent set of binoculars can be affordable. If you decide to invest in a pair of binoculars, take the time to ask fellow birders and outdoors enthusiasts for their advice. You also can visit a store that carries bird-watching equipment to decide which optics are right for you and your budget.

Identifying birds, especially songbirds, can seem overwhelming to the beginner. Here are some helpful hints to make the task easy and fun:

- Notice the general size of the bird. Is it tiny like a Carolina chickadee, or is it a larger bird, closer to the size of a blue jay? Trying to look at small details can seem complex at first, so start with the general size and shape of the bird.

- Identify the main colors of the bird. Is the bird all red or all blue? Does it have different colors on its body?

- The bill’s shape and size can help you determine the bird’s family. Most sparrows have thick, conical bills for cracking seeds, while the bills of warbler species – primarily insect-eaters – are much thinner and smaller.

- Tail length and shape also can be key features to look for in some species.
With a little practice, you will begin to learn which species are related and the characteristics they share. You soon will be able to look at a bird and determine if it is a sparrow, a warbler or a thrush and you will be well on your way!

**Suggested Reading**


**Popular Birding Web Sites**

**Cornell Lab of Ornithology**  
http://birds.cornell.edu/

**Audubon Arkansas**  
http://www.audubon.org/states/ar/ar/

**Arkansas Audubon Society**  
http://www.arbirds.org/
**Ruby-throated Hummingbird**
*Archilochus colubris*

**Present**  Summer resident

**Description**  Males and females are green above with a white breast and belly. Males have an iridescent red throat patch, which can be seen in good lighting. Females lack red throat patch.

**Song**  High-pitched, raspy twitterings.

**Nest**  Constructed of down, lichens and plant buds “cemented” together with delicate spider webs.

**Fun fact**  The ruby-throated hummingbird is the most common Arkansas hummingbird, although other species, like the rufous hummingbird, are sometimes spotted in the state. When in flight, a hummingbird’s heart rate may reach 1,220 beats per minute.
Tufted Titmouse  
* Baeolophus bicolor  

**Present**  Year-round resident  

**Description**  Gray above and light below with a sharp crest and buff-colored sides. Males and females are similar in appearance.  

**Song**  A clear, whistled “peter peter peter.” Also gives harsh, scolding calls.  

**Nest**  Nests in natural cavities or birdhouses. Makes nests of moss, hair and leaves.  

**Fun fact**  Occasionally, titmice from a prior brood will remain where they hatched and help their parents raise young the next year. This is a very rare behavior in songbirds.
Carolina Chickadee
Poecile carolinensis

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** Distinctive black cap and bib with gray above and buffy sides.

**Song** Clear whistles of “fee bee fee bay.” Call is a harsh “chickadee dee dee.”

**Nest** Nest placed in cavities such as a hole in a tree. They also use nest boxes.

**Fun fact** In the winter, this bird often associates with mixed-species flocks, foraging with other birds like titmice, nuthatches and woodpeckers. This is the only species of chickadee found in Arkansas, but there are seven species found in the United States.
**White-breasted Nuthatch**
*Sitta carolinensis*

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  Gray back, dark crown and nape and a white face. Has a large, slightly upturned bill and gray tail that’s rusty brown underneath.

**Song**  Song consists of soft and nasally whistled notes. Common contact call is nasally “ank.”

**Nest**  Cavity nester. Uses both natural cavities and bird boxes.

**Fun fact**  Nuthatches are the only birds that can be seen climbing down tree trunks; they often are confused with woodpeckers at first glance because of their feeding behavior.
Brown Creeper
*Certhia americana*

**Present** Winter resident

**Description** Brown with a white breast and throat, and a long, rusty-brown tail. Often seen creeping along tree trunks and limbs, gleaning insects from the bark.

**Song** Song is a series of high and thin whistles sounding like “see wee see tu wee,” usually starting high and ending low. Call is a high-pitched “tsee.”

**Nest** Hammock-like nest made of bark, moss and silk, and placed between loose bark and trunk of tree.

**Fun fact** This species uses its coloration to avoid predators. It will remain motionless and rely on natural camouflage when pursued.
Carolina Wren
Thryothorus ludovicianus

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  A small, brown bird with a short tail, often held upright. Buff coloring below with a distinct white eyebrow.

**Song**  A loud and clear “teakettle teakettle teakettle.” Males sing in any month of the year.

**Nest**  Nests are placed in cavities or sheltered crevices.

**Fun fact**  Carolina wrens are one of the most common and vivacious backyard birds in Arkansas. They are well known for nesting in hanging bike helmets, barbecue grills and flowerpots.
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
*Dendroica coronata*

**Present** Winter resident

**Description** Brownish gray above with streaks on breast. It has a noticeable yellow rump patch seen in flight and yellow patches in front of its wings. Colors are duller in winter.

**Song** A loose trill, either lower or higher in pitch at the end. The call is a low “chep” and is likely to be heard during winter.

**Nest** This species does not breed in Arkansas but is a common winter resident. It breeds in the northern United States and Canada.

**Fun fact** The yellow-rumped warbler leaves Arkansas in spring to breeding grounds as far north as Canada.
Pine Warbler  
*Dendroica pinus*

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  Greenish yellow above, yellow below with grayish streaks on sides of breast. Gray wings with distinct white wing bars. White under tail and belly.

**Song**  A rich, but simple trill of notes.

**Nest**  Constructed of pine needles, bark and grasses bound together with silk from spider webs. Usually placed relatively high in a pine tree and concealed in a bundle of pine needles.

**Fun fact**  This warbler eats large quantities of seeds when insect populations are low. These birds are known to enjoy suet feeders.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
*Regulus calendula*

**Present**  Winter resident

**Description**  One of the smallest songbirds in North America. Drab, greenish-gray bird with dark wings, distinct wing bars and a white eye ring. Males have a red crest, which can be difficult to see unless the bird raises it.

**Song**  Surprisingly loud and variable; begins with high, clear whistles and picks up speed.

**Nest**  Ruby-crowned kinglets do not breed in Arkansas. The nests usually are placed high in conifer trees and have an average of eight eggs per nest.

**Fun fact**  Male ruby-crowned kinglets raise and lower their crown patches during aggressive encounters with other males.
Eastern Towhee
_Pipilo erythrophthalmus_

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  A large sparrow with a long tail. Males have black above, a white belly and rufous sides. Females are similar with duller coloration.

**Song**  One to three short introductory notes followed by a sweet trill. “Drink your teeeeee.” The call is a harsh “tow-hee” or “che-wink.”

**Nest**  Nests are made of grass, leaves and bark, and often are placed on or near the ground.

**Fun fact**  The rufous-sided towhee was recently split into two species – the spotted towhee in the western United States and the eastern towhee, which is more common here. Both varieties have been seen in Arkansas.
Chipping Sparrow

*Spizella passerina*

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** Grayish breast and tail, grayish cheek with a dark eyeline and a white line above it. Also has a rusty-brown cap. Males and females are similar in appearance.

**Song** A dry rattle of notes sung on the same pitch.

**Nest** Nests are made of grasses and other materials, and are placed in shrubs or trees.

**Fun fact** Sparrows such as the chipping sparrow have strong conical bills for husking seeds during winter when fewer insects are available.
White-throated Sparrow
Zonotrichia albicollis

Present  Winter resident

Description  This bird has two forms – “white-striped” and “tan-striped.” The white-striped adult has a white eyebrow that turns yellow near its bill, a white throat and a gray breast and belly. The tan-striped form has a tan eyebrow and a drab breast.

Song  Two whistled notes followed by three to four quivering, higher-pitched notes in the rhythm of “Oh sweet Canada Canada Canada.”

Nest  This bird breeds mostly in Canada.

Fun fact  During a banding study, one white-throated sparrow migrated more than 1,100 miles to arrive at the same back yard for six consecutive years.
White-crowned Sparrow  
Zonotrichia leucophrys

**Present**  Winter resident

**Description**  This bird has black and white stripes on its head, an unstreaked gray belly and face, a tan back with streaks and white wing bars. Immature birds have tan and gray stripes on the head.

**Song**  The song begins with clear whistles and then buzzes and trills on different pitches.

**Nest**  Cuplike nests are built from a variety of materials, including rootlets, grass, forbs, twigs, leaves and fine bark.

**Fun fact**  These birds have a great deal of variation in their singing dialects. It is thought that young birds learn these dialects from their fathers or nearby male birds.
Dark-eyed Junco
Junco hyemalis

**Present**  Winter resident

**Description**  Overall color varies from brown to dark gray. Belly and underside of tail are white. White outer tail feathers show clearly when bird is in flight. Has a pink bill.

**Song**  A short trill. Call notes vary and include “zeet” and “zip.”

**Nest**  These birds do not nest in Arkansas, but are very common winter residents.

**Fun fact**  The dark-eyed junco has five different subspecies that used to be considered separate species. The form we have in Arkansas is called the “slate-colored” form.
House Sparrow  
*Passer domesticus*

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** Males have a black bib, gray back and crown, a brown nape, and brownish wings. Females are grayish brown with brown crown, a buffy eye stripe and lighter bill.

**Song** Unchanging series of chirps.

**Nest** Nests in birdhouses, cavities or crevices.

**Fun fact** This bird was introduced to the United States from Europe. It is one of the most common birds in the United States and often beats native bird species like bluebirds and woodpeckers to nest cavities.
House Finch
Carpodacus mexicanus

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  Males have a pinkish-red forehead and breast, brown back and tail, and streaked flanks. Females are brown above and have brown-and-white streaks underneath.

**Song**  A sweet, variable song.

**Nest**  Made of twigs and grasses and placed in shrubs, trees, birdhouses, crevices and hanging planters.

**Fun fact**  House finches are native to the western United States, but were released in New York City in the 1920s by pet shop owners when legislation was passed to prevent their use as pets.
American Goldfinch
Carduelis tristis

**Size** 5"

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** During the breeding season, males are bright yellow with black wings and a black forehead. Females are a dirty yellow with a brownish back and black wings during breeding season. During winter, both sexes are drab yellow.

**Song** Consists of rapid warbling notes. Flight call is “per-chic-o-ree, per-chic-o-ree.”

**Nest** A small cup made of rootlets and grasses lined with soft materials.

**Fun fact** American goldfinches often are seen in flocks in winter. They enjoy each other’s company so much that a single perched bird can make a flock stop and perch nearby.
**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  Dark gray above with a whitish gray throat, a gray wash on sides of breast, and a yellow belly. Look for this bird to flick its tail while perching on branches.

**Song**  Consists of two rough notes sounding like “phee-bee.”

**Nest**  Constructed of grass, twigs, moss and mud. This bird commonly nests on ledges under the front porches of houses.

**Fun fact**  Eastern phoebes used to rely on natural structures like cliffs for nesting sites, but now they often use buildings. Keep an eye on ledges at your house, as you might have a new neighbor in spring.
Summer Tanager  
*Piranga rubra*

**Present**  Summer resident

**Description**  Male is a large, brilliant red bird with gray-brown bill. It lacks the male northern cardinal’s orange bill and black mask. Female is yellowish all over with dark wings and a thick, light-colored bill.

**Song**  Consists of varied whistles. Call is a “pik-l-tuk-l-tuck.” Males are very territorial and sing loudly to establish territories and attract mates.

**Nest**  Tanagers place their nests on horizontal branches of trees.

**Fun fact**  Tanagers are known to feed on wasps and bees. If you watch one closely, you might see it capture a bee or wasp and break off the insect’s stinger before eating it.
Northern Cardinal  
Cardinalis cardinalis

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  Male is all red with a large crest and a black mask around a bright orange bill. Female is brownish on chest and back with reddish wings and tail, blackish face and orange bill.

**Song**  Both males and females sing a song consisting of clear, varying slurred whistles, “whoit whoit whoit, chew chew chew.” Call note is a metallic “chip.”

**Nest**  Cuplike nest made of twigs, bark and leaves. Often found in dense bushes or in small trees.

**Fun fact**  In many species of songbirds, males sing to attract mates and defend territories. However, cardinals are among the few species in which females regularly sing.
Indigo Bunting  
*Passerina cyanea*

**Present**  Summer resident

**Description**  Male is bright blue with dark wings and a dark, conical bill; female is brown with a dark, conical bill.

**Song**  Lively song often with paired phrases such as “tsee tsee tew tew cheer cheer.” Call is a staccato “zip.”

**Nest**  Made of grasses, leaves and stems placed in a shrub or small tree.

**Fun fact**  Although the male indigo bunting is bright and easily spotted, the female is dull brown to better hide from predators when vulnerable on the nest.
**Painted Bunting**  
*Passerina ciris*

**Present**  Summer resident

**Description**  Males are brightly colored with a blue head, red below and a light green back and wings. Females are dull green with a gray bill.

**Song**  Musical, warbling song. Call is a staccato “chich.”

**Nest**  Constructed of stems, grasses and leaves, and placed in shrubs or small trees.

**Fun fact**  Painted buntings are considered by many to be the most beautiful Arkansas bird. But their colors have gotten them into trouble; they have been illegally used in the pet trade.
Eastern Bluebird
_Sialia sialis_

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** Male has bright blue head, back and tail with a rusty-brown throat and breast. Females have a less vibrant blue on head, back and tail and have a buffier brown throat and breast than the male.

**Song** Soft, slurred whistles; call is a soft chatter.

**Nest** Cavity nesters. They often use bluebird houses.

**Fun fact** During the nesting season, males and females are extremely territorial. They have been known to peck at their reflections in windows, thinking them competition.
American Robin  
*Turdus migratorius*

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  A commonly recognized bird with gray above and orange-brown below. Males have slightly bolder coloration than females.

**Song**  The song is a vibrant “cheerily cheerup.” Call is “teek” and a whinnying “tuk tuk tuk.”

**Nest**  Sticks, grass and mud placed in trees or on the ledges of buildings.

**Fun fact**  The American robin’s diet changes with the seasons. From spring through fall, it will live primarily on insects and earthworms. During winter months, it feeds more heavily on berries and other fruits.
Northern Mockingbird
*Mimus polyglottos*

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  Gray back and tail and lighter breast. Long tail with white outer tail feathers and white wing bars. Males and females are similar.

**Song**  This bird mimics the songs of other bird species within its range, repeating phrases three times or more. These birds have been known to imitate other sounds such as the ringing of cell phones and the backfiring of cars. They often sing all night.

**Nest**  Made of twigs and leaves and placed in shrubs or small trees.

**Fun fact**  The northern mockingbird is the Arkansas state bird.
Brown Thrasher
*Toxostoma rufum*

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** Rusty brown above with white below, streaked in brown. Has a long tail and a distinctive yellow eye. Males and females are similar.

**Song** This mimic repeats phrases of other bird songs twice.

**Nest** Nests of twigs and grass are usually in dense bushes.

**Fun fact** Brown thrashers spend much of their time foraging for insects on the ground. They will defend their nests aggressively against predators such as snakes.
Cedar Waxwing
Bombycilla cedrorum

**Present**  Winter resident

**Description**  Yellowish-brown crested bird with a black mask. Tail and wings are gray with a red tip on wings and a yellow band on the tail.

**Song**  Very high-pitched and slurred whistles.

**Nest**  Cedar waxwings almost never nest in Arkansas, but are common during winter.

**Fun fact**  These birds are seen in large flocks in winter and forage with other cedar waxwings, American robins and northern mockingbirds. They eat the berries of red cedar and also berries from non-native ornamentals such as Japanese honeysuckle.
Purple Martin
Progne subis

**Present**  Summer resident

**Description**  Male is dark bluish purple with black wings and tail. Female has duller back, tail and wings, and a gray-flecked belly.

**Song**  Call sounds like “sher sher,” and is given near nest boxes.

**Nest**  Constructed of mud, sticks and leaves, which they place in manmade houses.

**Fun fact**  The practice of putting up gourds or houses for purple martins began with American Indians. The species once nested in holes vacated by woodpeckers and natural cavities in cliffs. They now nest almost exclusively in manmade houses.
Barn Swallow
Hirundo rustica

**Present**  Summer resident

**Description**  Glossy blue and black above with orange below and a long, black, forked tail; almost always seen feeding in flight. Males and females are similar, though males have longer tails and bolder coloration.

**Song**  Series of twittery notes, often interrupted with rattling.

**Nest**  Nests are constructed of mud, often near other nesting individuals.

**Fun fact**  Some swallows are known as mud nesters. These birds build their nests out of mud and often nest in loose aggregations in protected areas around culverts, buildings and under bridges.

**Size**  $6\frac{3}{4}''$
**Chimney Swift**  
*Chaetura pelagica*

**Present**  
Summer resident

**Description**  
A gray bird with short tail and long, pointed wings seen flying in early spring through summer. It flies with short, rapid wing beats.

**Song**  
A rolling and twittering “chitter-chitter-chitter.”

**Nest**  
Made of twigs, see below.

**Fun fact**  
These birds used to nest in snags and hollow trees, but often rely on humans and nest in their chimneys (thus their name). The nest is made of twigs, and is held in place with a sticky substance produced in the bird’s mouth.
**Red-bellied Woodpecker**
*Melanerpes carolinus*

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  Wings have black-and-white bars. Cap and neck are red. Breast, belly and sides of neck are a buffy tan. The female has red patches on the back of the neck and above the bill; male has a red cap extending from the bill to the back of the neck.

**Song**  Call is a “churr-churr.”

**Nest**  These birds dig their cavities in living trees.

**Fun fact**  The red-bellied woodpecker’s tongue is three times as long as its bill. The tongue is so long that it splits in two and wraps around and over the bird’s skull and reconnects with the nasal passage.
**Present**  Winter resident

**Description**  This bird has distinct black-and-white stripes on the face, a red cap, and a yellowish wash on the belly. The back has black-and-white barring. Males have red throat patches while females have a white throat.

**Song**  Calls are a nasal or whiny mewing sound.

**Nest**  Prefers to nest in live trees with soft woods that make cavity excavation easier.

**Fun fact**  Sapsuckers typically dig for food in orderly, nearly straight rows. If you find straight rows of holes in the bark of a tree, it is likely the work of a sapsucker.
Downy Woodpecker  
Picoides pubescens

Present  Year-round resident

Description  Males and females have black wings with white spots, a white breast and belly, and black and white on the head. Males have a small red patch on the back of the head. The downy woodpecker is smaller than the hairy woodpecker.

Song  A descending whinny. The call is a high-pitched “pick.”

Nest  Excavates its cavity in dead wood.

Fun fact  Male woodpeckers don’t sing very well. Instead, they hammer at hollow wood with their bills to attract females. Sometimes they’ll hammer at drain pipes, downspouts and anything else that will produce a loud sound.
Hairy Woodpecker  
*Picoides villosus*

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  Males and females have black wings with white spots, a white breast and belly, and black and white on the head. Males have a small red patch on the back of the head. They are larger than the downy woodpecker with a bill almost the length of its head.

**Song**  A rattle. The call is a sharp “peek.”

**Nest**  Excavates its cavity in live trees.

**Fun fact**  While hairy woodpeckers look a lot like downy woodpeckers, the two species often feed on different parts of trees. Hairy woodpeckers are seen more often on tree trunks, while downy woodpeckers often are seen feeding on branches.
Northern Flicker  
*Colaptes auratus*

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** A distinctive woodpecker with a buffy tan breast spotted boldly in black, a black bib, white rump patch and a small red spot on the back of the neck. Its back is tan with black bars. Males have a black mustache not seen on the females.

**Song** A loud series of “kee kee kee kee kee.” Also a less profound “wicka wicka wicka” followed by the nasally call “queeer.”

**Nest** Excavates cavities in dead wood. Also known to use bird boxes.

**Fun fact** Woodpeckers often use their stiff tail feathers as a brace while they sit vertically on tree trunks and forage for insects.
Pileated Woodpecker

**Dryocopus pileatus**

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** A very large black bird with a distinctive red crest. Males have a red mustache. The large size of this bird makes it unmistakable.

**Song** Contact call is a loud “wek” or “kuk.” The territorial call is a repeated “kuk kuk kuk.”

**Nest** Cavity nester. Excavates its cavity in dead wood.

**Fun fact** The pileated woodpecker is similar in appearance to the ivory-billed woodpecker, which was once a resident of bottomland hardwood forests in the Southeast. It is now debated whether the ivory-billed woodpecker is extinct.
Brown-headed Cowbird
Molothrus ater

Present  Year-round resident

Description  Males have a brown head and a black breast, belly, tail and wings. Females are brown with streaking on the breast.

Song  Often described as the sound of water dripping.

Nest  These birds don’t build a nest.

Fun fact  These birds are brood parasites. Females find nests of other birds and lay their eggs in those nests. The host mother raises the young of the brown-headed cowbird, which often develops faster than her own young and starves out the other hatchlings in the nest.
Common Grackle  
*Quisculus quiscula*

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  A large, long-tailed blackbird with purple iridescentence on the head, back and belly. The most notable characteristic is the bright yellow eye. Females are similar but are somewhat duller and have shorter tails than males.

**Song**  Consists of harsh and squeaky notes.

**Nest**  Constructed of grass and mud and placed in trees.

**Fun fact**  These birds often form large flocks including European starlings and brown-headed cowbirds. One such flock made its roost in North Little Rock during the 1960s. This single roost sometimes contained nearly 40 million birds.
European Starling  
*Sturnus vulgaris*

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** A glossy black bird in summer with red legs, a short tail and a distinct yellow bill. In winter, the birds have large yellowish spots over entire body and a blackish bill.

**Song** Variable song often imitating other birds.

**Nest** Nests in cavities and crevices. Often takes bird boxes from native species.

**Fun fact** A group that wanted all the species in William Shakespeare’s works to be introduced to America released about 100 European starlings in New York City’s Central Park in the late 1800s. Starlings now number in the hundreds of millions in America and are considered nuisance animals.
Blue Jay
*Cyanocitta cristata*

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** A crested bird with bright blue wings and tail with gray below. The tail is tipped in white, as are the edges of some feathers. The bird has a dark necklace. Males and females look similar.

**Song** A harsh song consisting of “jay jay.” Also a clear, whistled “toolool.” Can imitate the calls of hawks.

**Nest** Made of twigs and leaves and placed in trees.

**Fun fact** Blue jays are a member of the family Corvidae, which also includes the American crow. Corvids are considered to be very intelligent birds.
American Crow  
*Corvus brachyrhynchos*

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** Large, all-black bird with black bill, often seen flying.

**Song** A throaty “caw caw caw.”

**Nest** Twigs and sticks lined with bark and grass, placed in tree.

**Fun fact** American crows display mobbing behavior. Often several individuals will chase and harass predators, including owls and hawks, to drive them away from the area.
Mourning Dove
Zenaida macroura

**Present**  Year-round resident

**Description**  Large gray-brown bird with black spots on the wings. The long tail is tipped in white.

**Song**  A mournful song sounding like “oo AHhh oo oo oooo.”

**Nest**  Variable; usually a loose platform consisting of grasses and twigs.

**Fun fact**  Mourning doves can be very long-lived birds. One of the luckiest mourning doves on record lived more than 31 years.
Barred Owl
Strix varia

Present  Year-round resident

Description  A large brown-and-white owl with a streaked belly. Lacks ear tufts and has brown eyes.

Song  Cheerfully hoots, “hoo-hoo-hoohoo,” in a rhythm like “who cooks for you?”

Nest  Uses cavities and old hawk or crow nests.

Fun fact  Owls eat their prey whole. They do not digest the bones and fur of their prey, but their body compacts the remains into pellets, which the bird regurgitates. Keep your eye open for the pellets. If you find a pile, look up and you may find a roosting owl.
Eastern Screech-owl
Megalascops asio

**Present** Year-round resident

**Description** A small owl with ear tufts. The eastern screech-owl has two color morphs, rufous (reddish brown) and gray. These birds generally are strongly barred above with black streaks and spots below.

**Song** The main song is a descending whinny. Sometimes it remains one pitch.

**Nest** Cavity nester; also uses bird boxes.

**Fun fact** Owls are difficult to see in the wild because they are generally nocturnal. Most owls hunt during the night to avoid conflict with other predators like hawks, which are active during the day.
Attracting Birds
TO YOUR BACK YARD

Planting Natives
Attracting birds to your yard is easier than you may think. First and foremost, birds need good habitat that provides food, water and cover from predators and safe nesting areas. A great way to attract birds is to plant native species that offer natural food sources such as fruits, seeds and nectar-rich flowers. Native plants do well in Arkansas’ soils and climate, so they require little watering, fertilizing or pest control. They also provide excellent habitat for a variety of other native wildlife species, including butterflies, frogs and lizards.

Feeding Birds
In addition to providing natural food and cover with native plants, many people enjoy feeding birds. Many bird species will visit bird feeders, particularly in the winter when insects and other food sources are scarce. Feeding birds is a wonderful way to create bird-watching opportunities in your own back yard, but there are risks associated with the practice. Birds may collide with windows, contract diseases from other birds at the feeder or be killed by cats. By placing
feeders carefully, maintaining them and keeping your cats indoors, you can reduce these risks and enjoy this popular activity.

**Types of Feeders and Seed**

Many types of feeders and seeds are available at just about any outdoors store or pet store. Here is a short list of the many types of feeders available.

**Sunflower-seed tubes** – Tube feeders are extremely easy to use. Just open the top and fill them with black-oil sunflower seed or any other prepared birdseed. Black-oil sunflower seed is often considered the best choice for common backyard birds. This energy-rich seed has a thin shell that is easily cracked. Common visitors to tube feeders include titmice, chickadees, nuthatches and goldfinches.

**Suet feeders** – Suet is a high-energy food made with animal fats and other ingredients. The suet is placed in a special wire cage where the birds can reach it with their bills, but other animals cannot get to it. Suet is best put out in cooler weather, as it can turn rancid in temperatures above 70 degrees. It attracts titmice, woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches and even warblers.
**Thistle feeders** – Thistle feeders are designed especially for this type of seed, and are very popular with smaller-beaked finches such as American goldfinches. Although thistle is more expensive than other types of birdseed, squirrels often ignore it.

**Hopper feeder** – Hopper feeders are usually more compact than tube feeders and can hold many types of seeds. They have extended feeding shelves, so many birds can use them at the same time.

**Hummingbird feeder** – Hummingbird feeders are great for the spring, summer and fall. Hummingbirds require enormous amounts of energy for their size, and once they find your feeder, they will be frequent guests. The feeder is filled with a sugar solution to substitute for the nectar these birds normally eat. The solution can be made with one part sugar to four parts water. There is no need to add food coloring. Be sure to wash this type of feeder once a week with hot water to prevent mold.
Feeder location

When placing your feeders, consider the possible dangers to the birds such as predation by cats or collisions with windows. To reduce the possibility of birds colliding with windows, place them either far away from your home or within three feet. Evergreen shrubs and other natural cover nearby can give visiting birds a perch as well as escape cover.

Feeder maintenance

Many diseases, such as salmonella and avian pox, can be transmitted at feeders. Bird feeders should be cleaned at least once a month with either liquid detergent or a 9-to-1 water-bleach solution. Rinse and dry feeders thoroughly before refilling them. Cleaning up the seed husks beneath the feeders can cut down on disease and pests. If left unchecked, the husks can become a haven for mold and parasites.
Show off your enthusiasm for the outdoors and help the AGFC spread the word about Arkansas’ exceptional birding by joining in the Wings Over Arkansas awards program.

Send us your Arkansas checklist and completed application and receive a decorative lapel pin and a colorful certificate identifying your level of birding expertise.

**Official Rules**

If using the checklist included in this book, please record the date and location of each bird species checked on a separate piece of paper. **This information must be included with the application to receive your pin and certificate.**

All birds listed must be within the state of Arkansas when identified.

All birds listed must be alive, wild and unrestrained when observed.

All birds listed must be identified by sight or sound by the person submitting the application.

No exotic species will be counted.

Retroactive bird lists are acceptable.
Five levels of achievement

- **Chickadee Level** – Must be 12 years old or younger and have 25-50 birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist.

- **Wood Duck Level** – 50-99 birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist.

- **Kingfisher Level** – 100-174 birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist.

- **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher Level** – 175-249 birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist.

- **Peregrine Falcon Level** – 250 or more birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist.

Just photocopy the included application and checklist with your entries and mail them to:

Phyllis Speer  
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission  
6592 Buffalo Road  
Mountain Home, Arkansas 72653
Wings Over Arkansas Application

Name ________________________________________

Mailing Address ____________________________________

City _____________________________________________

State _______    Zip ____________

Number of Bird Species on Your Checklist __________

Certificate Level You Are Applying For: (Check One)

❑ Chickadee (25-50)
❑ Wood Duck (50-99)
❑ Kingfisher (100-174)
❑ Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (175-249)
❑ Peregrine Falcon (250 or More)

Would you like to receive the certificate(s) below the level you have applied for (If applicable)? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Name the areas in Arkansas where you go birding most frequently ______________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Name your two favorite birding locations in Arkansas

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
How many bird feeders do you maintain in your yard? ________________________________

How long have you been keeping a bird checklist of Arkansas birds? __________________________

I state that all the birds I have marked on my Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Bird Checklist were observed by me and that all information included on this application is true and correct. In making this application for recognition of the number of bird species that I have observed and identified, I authorize the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to use this information for research, informational, educational and other public purposes.

___________________________________________
Applicant’s Signature

___________________________________________
Parent or Teacher’s Signature (For applicants 12 or younger)

___________________________________________
Date of Application
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ducks, Geese and Swans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black-bellied Whistling-Duck</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater White-fronted Goose</td>
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<td>Snow Goose</td>
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<td>Ross’s Goose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada Goose</td>
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<td>Trumpeter Swan</td>
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<td>Tundra Swan</td>
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<td>Wood Duck</td>
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<td>Gadwall</td>
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<td>American Wigeon</td>
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<td>American Black Duck</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mallard</td>
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<td>Mottled Duck</td>
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<td>Blue-winged Teal</td>
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<td>Cinnamon Teal</td>
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<td>Northern Shoveler</td>
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<td>Northern Pintail</td>
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<td>Green-winged Teal</td>
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<td>Canvasback</td>
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<td>Redhead</td>
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<td>Ring-necked Duck</td>
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<td>Greater Scaup</td>
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<td>Lesser Scaup</td>
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<td>Surf Scoter</td>
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<tr>
<td>White-winged Scoter</td>
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<td>Black Scoter</td>
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<td>Long-tailed Duck</td>
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<td>Bufflehead</td>
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<td>Common Goldeneye</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hooded Merganser</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Merganser</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red-breasted Merganser</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruddy Duck</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouse, Turkeys and Quail</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruffed Grouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wild Turkey</td>
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<td>Northern Bobwhite</td>
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<tr>
<th>Loons and Grebes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red-throated Loon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Loon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pied-billed Grebe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horned Grebe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eared Grebe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Grebe</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pelicans, Cormorants and Anhingas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American White Pelican</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neotropic Cormorant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Double-crested Cormorant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anhinga</td>
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<tr>
<th>Herons, Egrets, Ibises, Storks and Vultures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Bittern</td>
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<td>Least Bittern</td>
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<td>Great Blue Heron</td>
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<tr>
<th>Ospreys, Hawks, Eagles and Falcons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Osprey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swallow-tailed Kite</td>
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<td>Mississippi Kite</td>
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<td>Bald Eagle</td>
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<td>Northern Harrier</td>
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<td>Sharp-shinned Hawk</td>
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<td>Cooper’s Hawk</td>
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<td>Red-shouldered Hawk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broad-winged Hawk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swainson’s Hawk</td>
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<td>Red-tailed Hawk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rough-legged Hawk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden Eagle</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Kestrel</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Prairie Falcon

Rails, Gallinules and Cranes
Yellow Rail
King Rail
Virginia Rail
Sora
Purple Gallinule
Common Moorhen
American Coot
Sandhill Crane

Plovers, Stilts and Sandpipers
Black-bellied Plover
American Golden-Plover
Piping Plover
Killdeer
Black-necked Stilt
American Avocet
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs
Solitary Sandpiper
Willet
Spotted Sandpiper
Upland Sandpiper
Whimbrel
Hudsonian Godwit
Marbled Godwit
Ruddy Turnstone
Red Knot
Sanderling
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
White-rumped Sandpiper
Baird's Sandpiper
Pectoral Sandpiper
Dunlin
Stilt Sandpiper
Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Dowitcher
Common Snipe
American Woodcock
Wilson's Phalarope
Red-necked Phalarope
Red Phalarope

Gulls and Terns
Laughing Gull
Franklin's Gull
Little Gull
Bonaparte's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Sabine's Gull
Caspian Tern
Common Tern
Forster's Tern
Least Tern
Black Tern

Doves and Pigeons
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
White-winged Dove
Mourning Dove
Inca Dove
Common Ground-Dove

Cuckoos
Black-billed Cuckoo
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Greater Roadrunner
Groove-billed Ani

Owls
Barn Owl
Eastern Screech-Owl
Great Horned Owl
Burrowing Owl
Barred Owl
Long-eared Owl
Short-eared Owl
Northern Saw-whet Owl

Goatsuckers
Common Nighthawk
Chuck-will's-widow
Whip-poor-will

Swifts, Hummingbirds and Kingfishers
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Rufous Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher

Woodpeckers
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Red-cockaded Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker

Passerines
Olive-sided Flycatcher
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Acadian Flycatcher
Alder Flycatcher
Willow Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Vermilion Flycatcher
Great Crested Flycatcher
Western Kingbird
Eastern Kingbird
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Loggerhead Shrike
White-eyed Vireo
Bell's Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Horned Lark
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Bank Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
Rock Wren
Carolina Wren
Bewick's Wren
House Wren
Winter Wren
Sedge Wren
Marsh Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Gray-cheeked Thrush
Swainson's Thrush
Hermit Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
American Pipit
Sprague's Pipit
Cedar Waxwing
Blue-winged Warbler
Golden-winged Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Northern Parula
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Magnolia Warbler
Cape May Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
This list was compiled from the Arkansas Audubon Society 2000 Field List and other sources and includes species periodically occurring in Arkansas.