

Birding Basics

Bird Guide & Checklist

Common Birds found at
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

This Guide is an educational tool for students engaging in Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's Environmental Education Program.

How to Use this Bird Guide & Checklist

All the birds in this guide are commonly seen on the Wildlife Refuge. Common identifiers (what to look or listen for) are listed. Examples: colors and patterns have arrows pointed to the area to look at; a bird's song or sound is written so it can be read similar to how it sounds.

Habitat Key:

Look for these symbols to determine that bird's preferred habitat:



Forest



Prairie



Wetland

Checklist:

Find these symbols and put an X by the right symbol if you see the bird or hear the bird.



See It



Hear It

American Robin

 *cheerily, cheer up,
cheer up, cheerily,
cheer up*



Habitat: Forest.
Commonly seen on the ground.

Size: Robin size

Look For: Orange or rust color breast and a dark gray back

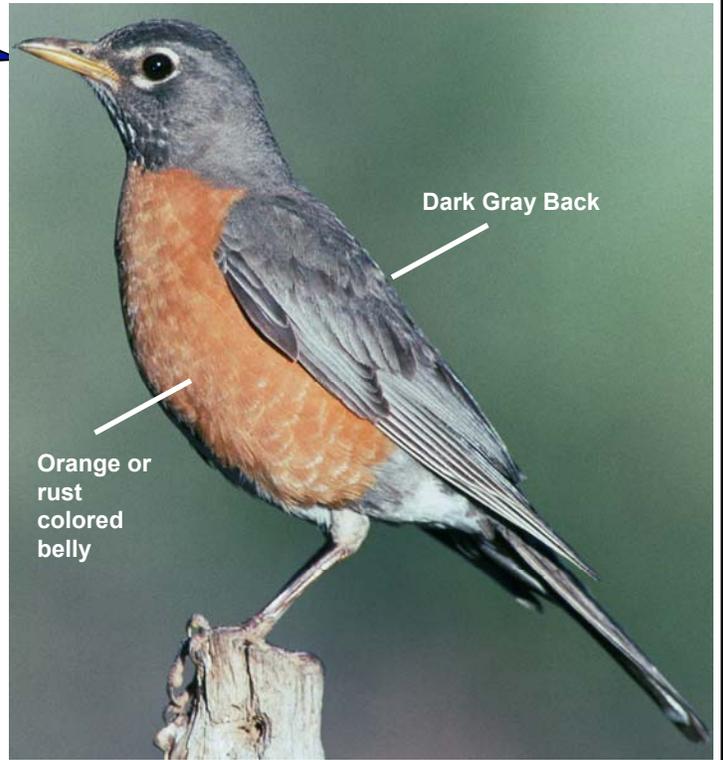
Sound or Song: Musical whistle

Food: berries, worms and insects

Season: Robins generally visit the Refuge in the spring, summer, and fall months. They are sometimes seen flocked together during winter.

Did You:  See It _____

 Hear It _____



American Goldfinch

 *ti-di-di-di, per-chick-o-ree
potato chip, potato chip*



Habitat: Forest.
Commonly in trees, at bird feeders, and in open fields

Size: Sparrow size

Look For: Bright yellow body, black cap on head, and black white striped wings

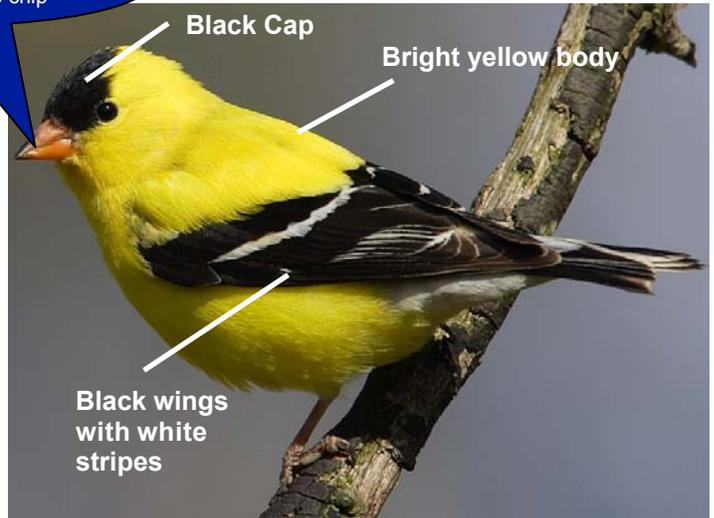
Sound or Song: Musical whistle

Food: Seed, sometimes insects

Season: The goldfinch is a year round resident. In the spring and summer the male is a vibrant yellow, in the winter he is a dull yellow-brown.

Did You:  See It _____

 Hear It _____



Baltimore Oriole



Habitat: Forest.

Commonly in trees feeding on insects attracted to feeders with nectar or fruit

Size: Robin size

Look For: Bright orange and black. Usually the oriole's song is heard before it is seen

Sound or Song: Rich musical piping notes

Food: Insects, fruit, and nectar

Season: Spring through summer

Did You:



See It _____



Hear It _____



hew li
or...
tee-deedee

Bright
orange
body



Black head,
black wings
with white
stripes

Sharp
pointed
bill

Cardinal



Habitat: Forest.

Commonly seen in trees and frequently visits the refuge feeder

Size: Robin size

Look For: All red body with a black mask on face, red bill, and distinctive crest on top of head

Sound or Song: Musical; many songs

Food: Insects, berries

Season: Year-round

Did You:



See It _____



Hear It _____



Crest

Black
mask

Birdie, birdie,
birdie; What
Cheer; whoit
whoit whoit

Blue Jay



Habitat: Forest.
Commonly seen in trees, such as oaks

Size: Robin size

Look For: Large bright blue and white bird with a white face, gray belly, and crest on top of head

Sound or Song: Harsh cry of "Jayy," also musical notes of "queedle, queedle"

Food: Insects, fruits, seeds; visits bird feeders

Season: Year-round

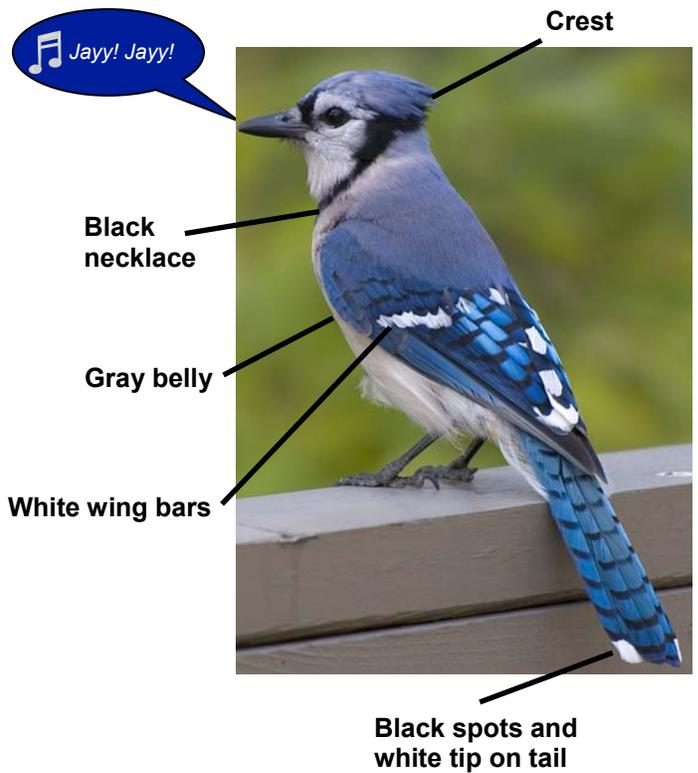
Did You:



See It _____



Hear It _____



Phoebe



Habitat: Forest.
Commonly on top of dead tree branches

Size: Sparrow size

Look For: Gray-brown body, breast and belly light in color; easier to hear than see; pumps tail up and down and spreads tail when perched

Sound or Song: Musical whistle - it says its name

Food: Insects

Season: Late spring and summer

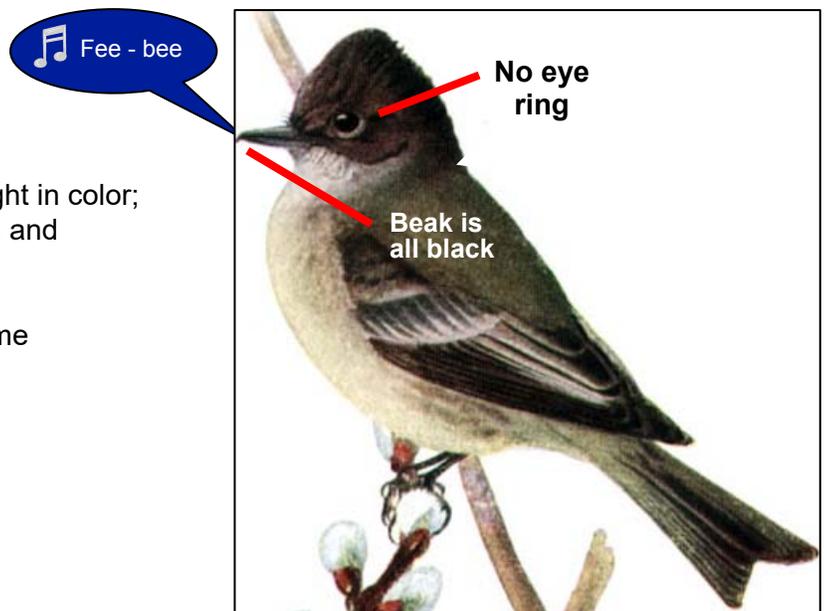
Did You:



See It _____



Hear It _____



Song Sparrow



Habitat: Forest.
Commonly in thick shrubs and on the ground feeding

Size: Sparrow size

Look For: Heavily-streaked chest that forms a dark spot

Sound or Song: Series of musical and buzzing notes

Food: Insects and seeds

Season: Late spring to late summer/early fall



Did You:  See It _____

 Hear It _____

Black-capped Chickadee



Habitat: Forest.
Commonly seen in trees

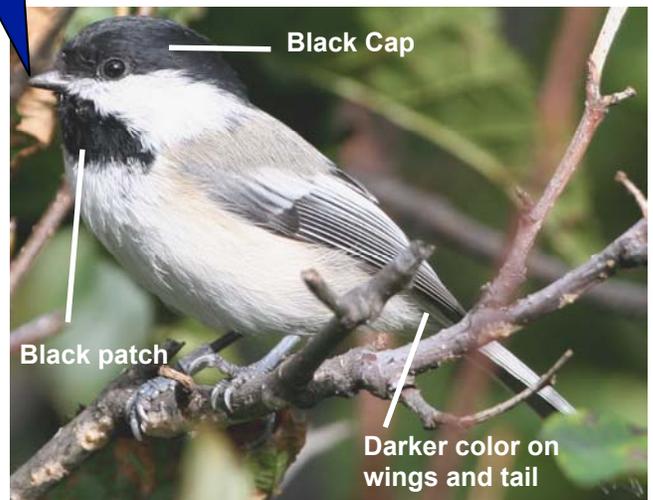
Size: Sparrow size

Look For: Black cap on top of head and patch on throat; gray and white body; tail and wings darker in color

Sound or Song: Sings its name: "*Chick-a-dee dee dee*"

Food: Seeds and fruit; visits bird feeders

Season: Year-round



Did You:  See It _____

 Hear It _____

Pileated Woodpecker



Habitat: Forest. Commonly seen in trees and often visits suet feeders



Size: Crow size

Look For: All black with red crest on head; black wings with white underwing; long gray bill

Sound or Song: Listen for a loud drumming as it pecks at trees; the song sounds like laughter

Food: Insects, suet

Season: Year-round

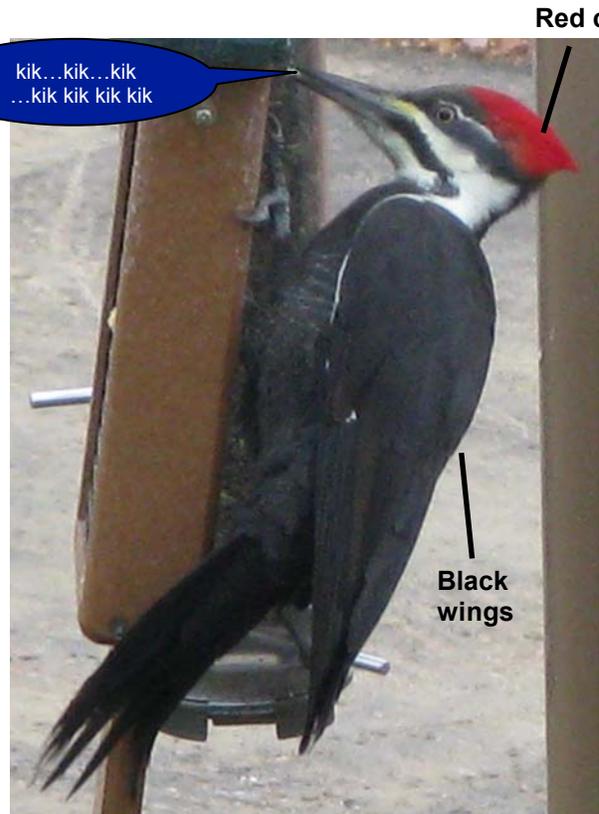
Did You:



See It _____



Hear It _____



Downy Woodpecker



Habitat: Forest. Commonly seen in trees and often visits suet feeders

Size: Sparrow to Robin size

Look For: All white belly with black and white-spotted wings; black spots on the tail; black stripe behind eyes; small black bill. The male downy has a red patch on its head

Sound or Song: Rapid whinny

Food: Insects, seeds

Season: Year-round

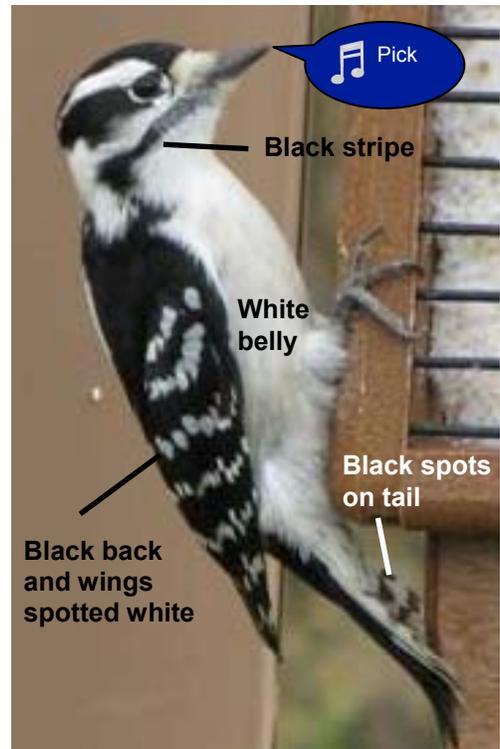
Did You:



See It _____



Hear It _____



Red-bellied Woodpecker

(often confused with the red-headed woodpecker)



Habitat: Forest. Commonly seen in trees and often visits suet feeders

Size: Robin size

Look For: Red head; black wings with many white spots (almost zebra-like stripes); breast has some red coloring; white rump

Sound or Song: Deep trill

Food: Insects, nuts, berries

Season: Year-round

Did You:

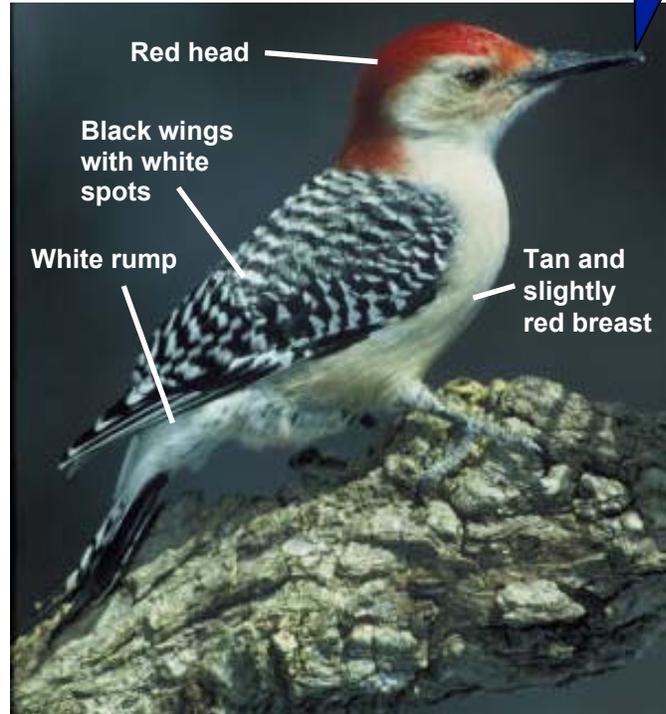


See It _____



Hear It _____

 Churr



Eastern Bluebird



Habitat: Prairie. Commonly seen in open fields with nearby trees.

Size: Sparrow size

Look For: Bright blue body and rusty or cinnamon colored neck

Sound or Song: Musical

Food: Insects, berries

Season: Late spring and summer

Did You:

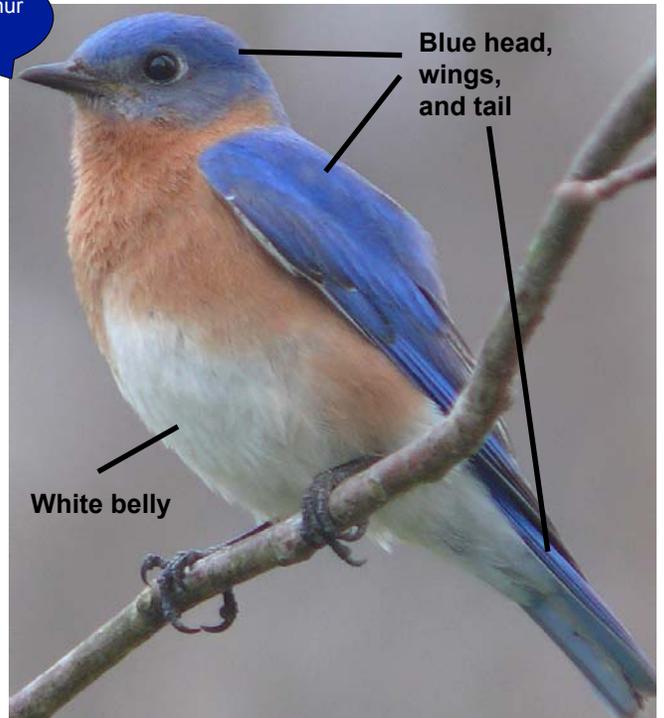


See It _____



Hear It _____

 Chur-le chur
chur-lee



Barn Swallow



Habitat: Prairie. Commonly seen in open to semi-open land like fields and marshes. Will nest on building ledges, with a mud built nest

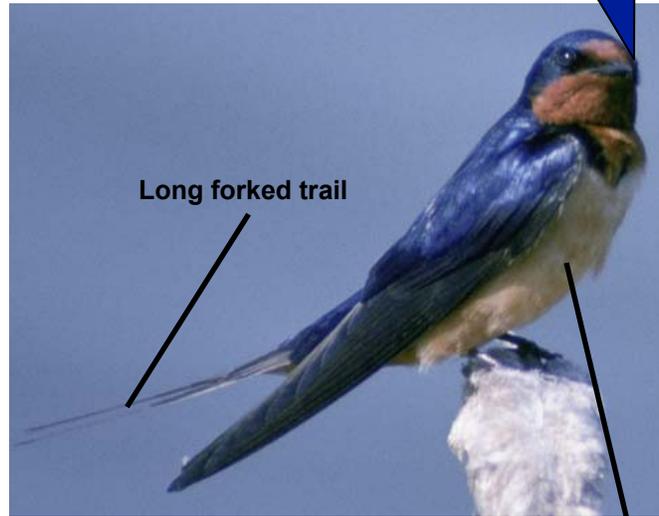
Size: Sparrow size

Look For: Blue black body with a rust color breast and belly

Sound or Song: Soft or anxious notes

Food: Beetles and flying insects

Season: Late spring to late summer/early fall



Did You:



See It _____



Hear It _____

White-breasted Nuthatch



Habitat: Forest. Commonly seen up-side-down hopping along trees. Common bird feeder visitor.

Size: Sparrow size

Look For: Sparrow size bird hopping head first up-side-down on sides of trees

Sound or Song: Rapid low whistled notes
"wha, wha, wha"

Food: Seeds and suet

Season: Year-round



Did You:



See It _____



Hear It _____

Killdeer



Habitat: Prairie. Commonly on the ground nesting in grassy areas. Upland shore bird, usually not near the water.

Size: Robin size

Look For: Two black bands around the neck; brown back and a white belly; rump appears reddish orange; performs a broken wing dance used to protect nestlings

Sound or Song: Warning call

Food: Insects

Season: Late spring to late summer/early fall

Did You:



See It _____



Hear It _____

 Kill-Deer



Red-winged Blackbird



Habitat: Wetland. Commonly seen in marshy areas in flocks early spring & late fall

Size: Robin size

Look For: Red, orange, and yellow on the wing; shiny black body

Sound or Song: Loud check; gurgling trill

Food: seeds, grains, insects, spiders, and snails

Season: Spring through fall

Did You:



See It _____



Hear It _____

 Conk-la-reee
Or...
o-ka-lay

