

Welcome to Birding in the Emerald Necklace!

The 1,100-acre Emerald Necklace is home to many species of birds. With this guide, we will introduce some resources for beginning birders – the birds are for **everyone**, and you could start seeing them today!



The Emerald Necklace

Tips to Get Started

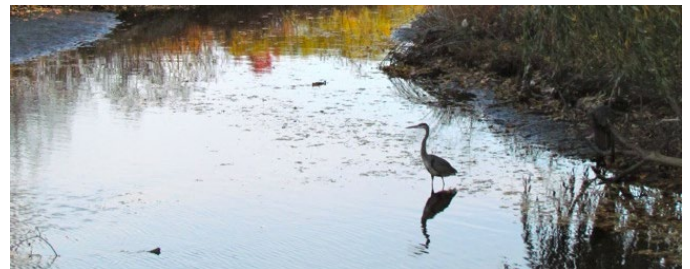
- You **do not** need any equipment to start birding. Begin with your senses, they are more powerful than you may first estimate.
- Start with one type of bird you find interesting, or one that's easy for you to find/observe.
- Take in all the behaviors of the birds you see.
 - What color are they? What size? How do they interact with each other? What do they eat? How do they react to sounds? What sounds do they create?
- Expanding your awareness to slighter and slighter movements and sounds over time will get you seeing and hearing more species of birds!

Bird Language

Bird language is a universal language that has been largely forgotten in modern times. It involves noticing the behaviors (including movements, sounds, and activities) of birds around you to gain a broader understanding of “what’s happening” in the habitat around you.

Our hunter-gatherer ancestors knew and used this skill to avoid danger and locate prey. That means, deep within us all, is the ability to learn and use this skill. Present day hunter-gatherers still use this skill today. Wildlife use this skill daily to ensure peace and safety.

You may ask, why is this relevant today, and to me? Well, if you want to enrich your time in nature, and see more elusive wildlife, then bird language is for you!



Additional Resources

- <https://ebird.org/home>
- <https://ebird.org/species/merlin>
- <https://www.inaturalist.org/>
- https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app
- <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/>
- <https://earbirding.com/blog/book>

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Blue Jay

Length: 11"

Shape: a large blue songbird; pointy feathers on the back of their heads form a crest, long striped tail

Color: Blue back, striped wings and tail, white belly

Habitat: woodlands, parks, backyards, bird feeders

Fun fact: Blue Jays collect and bury thousands of acorns in a lifetime for food, but many are never dug up and grow into trees



American Robin

Length: 10"

Shape: a large round bird

Color: Bright orange belly, dark head and back, yellow beak

Habitat: parks, woodlands, gardens; frequently seen hopping on the ground searching for earthworms

Fun fact: some Robins fly south for winter, but many stay year-round



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Red-Breasted Nuthatch

Length: 4 1/2"

Shape: a compact, pointy bird

Color: an orange belly, grey back with a white stripe on head and black stripe near eyes.

Habitat: Evergreen forests, bird feeders

Fun fact: powerful legs and feet allow them to hop up and down tree trunks in search of insects and seeds



Downy Woodpecker

Length: 6 1/2"

Shape: short neck and beak

Color: white belly, black and white speckled back, striped head (male has a spot of red on back of head)

Habitat: forests, often high off the ground, bird feeders. They use their heads and beaks like a hammer, pulling insects from tree bark

Fun Fact: the smallest American woodpecker, usually heard tapping on trees before they are seen



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American Crow

Length: 17 1/2"

Shape: a large, sleek all-black bird

Color: black

Habitat: very adaptable and widespread. Can be found in forests, fields, parks, backyards, city neighborhoods

Fun fact: very smart and vocal (caa-caa-caa); travel in families, with children, parents, grandparents in the group



European Starling

Length: 8 1/2"

Shape: a medium sized compact bird

Color: Glossy black with white speckles on belly in winter, brown wings, yellow beak

Habitat: introduced "invasive" species, now lives throughout the country gathering in large flocks in winter. Prefers to live near humans.

Fun fact: brought to America in 1890, they are now very common. They are often considered pests for making it hard for native species to thrive



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Red-tailed Hawk

Length: 19"

Shape: a large, soaring bird with a hooked beak and powerful claws

Color: speckled brown belly, dark back, brown outer wings, rust-colored tail. When perched, show whiter "backpack strap" stripes on their backs

Habitat: often seen soaring in circles, barely flapping their wings, or searched high in trees near fields where they can see far

Fun fact: our most common hawk, Red-tails were much more rare 40 years ago, when pesticides in the food chain made their eggshells too soft to survive.



Black-capped Chickadee

Length: 5 1/2"

Shape: a small, chunky bird

Color: black cap, white cheeks, short beak, gray wings, pale yellow belly

Habitat: woodlands, bird feeders

Fun fact: Have a distinctive song - chickadee-dee-dee



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Mourning Dove

Length: 12"

Shape: a slender, brown bird with a long pointed tail

Color: rusty brown, with some black speckles on wings

Habitat: fields, lawns, perched in trees

Fun fact: often travel in pairs, cooing song: *ah-ooh! whoo-who-who*



Gray Catbird

Length: 8 1/2"

Shape: slender, long

Color: gray with a black cap

Habitat: prefers to be near the ground or perched in thick shrubs

Fun fact: named for its loud, mewing call, Catbirds (like Mockingbirds) imitate the sounds of many other birds and are often heard before seen. Extremely abundant in shrubby areas!



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Northern Mockingbird

Length: 10 1/2"

Shape: a long, slender bird

Color: gray, black and white

Habitat: loves large open areas surrounded by shrubby undergrowth

Fun fact: have been known to make up to 200 different sounds - from the songs of other birds to car alarms



Cardinal

Length: 9"

Shape: a large, crested bird

Color: males are bright red with a black mask and bright red beaks, females are reddish brown. Both have a large crest of head feathers

Habitat: woodland edges, parks, backyards, dense cover

Fun fact: our only red-crested birds have a loud cheerful call *purty-purty-purty*



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American Goldfinch

Length: 5"

Shape: a small, compact bird

Color: males are bright yellow with a black mask in spring and summer, very plain in winter. Females are a plainer, dusty lime-yellow

Habitat: brushy woodland edges, overgrown meadows, backyard bird feeders if given their favorite thistle seeds



Red-winged Blackbird

Length: 8 3/4"

Shape: stocky, short wings, short tail

Color: males are all black with bright red and yellow shoulder patches, females are dark and speckled

Habitat: any wet areas with tall grass and cattails - marshes, ponds, lakes, riversides

Fun fact: males like to show off by spreading their wings to show their red and yellow and making loud calls *conk-a-reeee*



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Song Sparrow

Length: 6"

Shape: a small, chunky, compact bird

Color: classic "Little brown bird", brown with dusty white streaks

Habitat: found almost everywhere, but prefers dense field edges, hedges, backyards and parks

Fun fact: has a wide variety of songs, often jumbled together. Sometimes travels in small flocks. Likes to take "dirt baths", fluffing their feathers in a patch of dirt.



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