

Birds



Learn More About Birds

- Birds are vertebrates. They have a backbone.
- Birds are warm-blooded. They have a constant body temperature.
- Birds have four-chambered hearts. Birds breathe much more efficiently than mammals. Birds have lungs and distribute air to air sacs located in different areas in their bodies.
- Birds lay eggs. Baby birds hatch from eggs and may be precocial, relying little on parental care at birth, or altricial, being completely dependent on their parents for the first few weeks after hatching.
- Male birds are often brightly colored while females are camouflage. As a result, mother birds are less conspicuous to predators and are better able to protect their young.
- Birds have hollow bones. This feature makes their bones lighter so it is easier for them to fly, and it also makes the birds stronger.
- Birds have feathered wings they use to fly.
- There are six types of feathers. The two most common are contour feathers, which cover the body, and down feathers, which provide insulation underneath the contour feathers.

Blackbird

B



Red-winged Blackbird
(*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

Learn More About the Red-winged Blackbird

- Male birds are glossy black with bright red shoulder patches. Females are dark brown and do not have red shoulder patches.
- Adult birds are 7 to 9 inches long and have wingspans of 12 to 16 inches.
- This may be the most abundant North American bird and one of the most studied birds.
- Red-winged blackbirds' favorite habitat is the Louisiana freshwater marsh.
- Red-winged Blackbirds are omnivorous. They eat seeds and insects.

Bird

Bluebird

B



Eastern Bluebird
(*Sialia sialis*)

Learn More About the Eastern Bluebird

- Male birds are dark blue with a bright red chest. Female birds are drab gray blue with a duller red chest.
- Adult birds are 6 to 8 inches long with a 10 to 13 inch wingspan.
- Bluebirds nest in holes of trees, posts, and nest boxes.
- Bluebirds are found in open woodlands, farmlands, and orchards.
- Bluebirds are omnivorous. They eat insects and other invertebrates, as well as fruit.

Bird

Jay

J



Blue Jay
(*Cyanocitta cristata*)

Learn More About the Blue Jay

- Male and female Blue Jays look alike. They are mostly blue with white patches and white breasts. They have crests or tufts of feathers on their heads.
- Adult birds are 10-12 inches long with wingspans of 13-17 inches.
- They are found in forests and woodlands as well as urban and suburban areas where oak trees are present.
- Blue jays are intelligent birds.
- Blue jays are omnivorous. They eat insects, crustaceans, nuts, fruit and seeds.

Bird

Cardinal

C



Northern Cardinal
(*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

Learn More About the Cardinal

- Males are bright red all over with a black face. Females are tan or light brown with a red tail and wings.
- Adult birds are 8 to 9 inches long with a 10 to 12 inch wingspan.
- Males fiercely defend their territory. When a male sees its reflection in a glass surface it will fight the imaginary intruder.
- Cardinals live in swamps, woodland edges, near streams, and in neighborhood gardens.
- Cardinals are omnivorous. They eat seeds, flowers, berries, fruit and insects.

Bird

Cormorant

C



Neotropical Cormorant
(*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) or
(*Phalacrocorax olivaceus*)

Learn More About the Cormorant

- Male birds and female birds are alike. They are large, dark water birds with a long body and a long neck. They also have a medium sized bill with a hook on the tip.
- Adult birds are about 2 feet tall with a wingspan of greater than 3 feet.
- These birds are known to plunge-dive into the water to catch fish.
- Neotropical cormorants nest here in Louisiana along the coast, islands, lakes, bayous and rivers.
- Cormorants are carnivorous birds, eating fish and crustaceans.

Bird

Eagle

E



Bald Eagle
(*Haliaeetus leucocephalos*)

Learn More About the Bald Eagle

- Male birds and female birds look alike. They are large birds that have dark brown bodies, white heads and tails, and huge yellow bills
- Adult birds are about 3 feet tall and have a wingspan of over 6 feet.
- The bald eagle is the United States national symbol.
- They are often seen near coasts, rivers, and lakes.
- In 1978, the bald eagle was in danger of extinction. However, the Endangered Species Act (passed in 1973) helped to increase the population size, and in 1995 the classification changed from endangered to threatened. By 1999, there were some suggestions of removing the eagle from the Endangered Species list.
- Breeding pairs of bald eagles unite for life or until the death of their mate.
- Bald eagles are carnivorous. They eat mostly fish, but they will also eat other animals. Prey are grabbed with the eagle's large talons or claws. They are also scavengers which means that they sometimes take food from other animals.

Bird

Gallinule

G



Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio martinica*) or (*Porphyryula martinica*)

Learn More About the Purple Gallinule

- Males and females look alike. They have dark purple heads, necks and undersides, and they have green backs. They also have red and yellow bills. Their legs are long and yellow with long toes.
- The Purple Gallinule is also known as the "Swamp Hen." It is neither a chicken nor a duck, but the purple gallinule is actually a rail.
- Adult birds are 14-15 inches tall with a 22 inch wingspan.
- They are commonly seen in overgrown swamps and marshes.
- Purple gallinules build nests about 3 to 6 feet above ground and build ramps of vegetation up to their nests.
- Purple gallinules walk on top of floating vegetation. Their extremely long toes help them to walk on lily pads without sinking.
- The purple gallinule is omnivorous. It eats a variety of things including frogs, grasshoppers, spiders, water plants, seeds and fruit.

Bird

Goose

G



Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*)

Learn More About the Snow Goose

- Male and female snow geese look alike. Within the same species there are two color forms:
 - White morph- white with black and gray on the edge of the wings
 - Blue morph- white head and neck with dark gray to brown bodies
- Adult birds are 2-2 ½ feet tall with a wingspan of greater than 4 feet.
- Snow geese are known for their loud calls. Geese call at any hour, any season, and in any location.
- Snow Geese breed in northern Canada and Siberia and migrate to the southern U.S. and beyond.
- In 1916, population levels were very low and hunting was stopped. By 1975, populations had increased dramatically. Today populations have grown so large that geese are destroying nesting habitats and agricultural fields during migration.
- Snow geese are herbivorous. They prefer plants that grow in very moist soils. Wintering and migrating birds will also eat corn or rice.

Bird

Hummingbird

H



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
(*Archilochus colubris*)

Learn More About the Hummingbird

- Males have a red throat. Females have a white throat, and are slightly larger than males.
- Adult birds are 3 to 4 inches long with a 3 to 4 inch wingspan.
- The hummingbird sound comes from the beating of the bird's wings.
- They are found in gardens and near woodlands, where they can easily pollinate plants.
- Hummingbirds drink the nectar of plants and also eat small insects like flies, bees and spiders.

Bird

Nighthawk

N



Common Nighthawk
(*Chordeiles minor*)

Learn More About the Nighthawk

- Males and females are very similar. They are brown, black, gray and white. Males have white throats and white tail bands. The wings have white patches.
- Adult birds are about 9 inches long with a wingspan of nearly 2 feet.
- Common nighthawks live in or near woodlands, fields and towns.
- Common nighthawks are carnivorous. They are seen primarily at dusk and dawn eating insects.
- Analysis of the stomach contents have shown that in a single day, one bird ate over 500 mosquitoes, and another ate over 2000 flying ants.

Bird

Owl

O



Barn Owl
(Tyto alba)

Learn More About the Barn Owl

- Males and females look similar. They have heart shaped faces with dark eyes. Females are larger and darker.
- Adult birds are 13-16 inches long. Their wingspans range from 3 to 4 feet.
- Barn owls are nocturnal which means that they are active during the night. Barn owls' roosts and nests are found in dark places.
- Barn owls can easily find prey in dark places. They have excellent low-light vision, and they hunt at night. The owls' eyes look forward in a fixed position. To see to the side or back, the owl must turn its whole head. Owls also hear very well because their facial feathers funnel sound to their ears.
- Barn owls are carnivorous. They eat small animals like mice. They tear the animal apart and swallow it. Undigested parts like bones and fur are regurgitated to create owl pellets. Students often dissect owl pellets to study what owls eat.

Bird

Pelican

P



Brown Pelican
(*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

Learn More About the Pelican

- Males and females look alike. They are large dark water birds with long bills that have extensible pouches.
- Adult birds are 3 to 4 feet in length with wingspans of greater than 6 feet.
- Brown pelicans live along the shore but not in inland lakes.
- Pelicans are carnivorous. They hunt during the day and mostly eat fish. To hunt, pelicans fill their bills with water and fish. The bill of a pelican can hold more than 2 gallons. The pelican drains water from its bill and swallows the fish.
- The brown pelican is the smallest member of the pelican family.
- The brown pelican is the state bird of Louisiana, and it is part of the official state seal and flag.
- In 1966, pelicans completely disappeared in Louisiana due to DDT poisoning. (DDT is now an illegal pesticide.) In 1968, pelicans were brought back to Louisiana to repopulate the coast. In 1995, the pelican was declared recovered along the Louisiana coast.

Bird

Purple Martin

P



Purple Martin
(*Progne subis*)

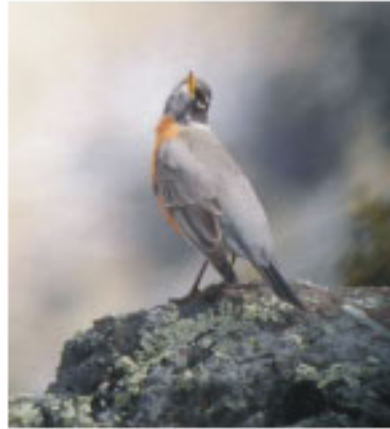
Learn More About the Purple Martin

- Males are a dark, glossy purplish blue. Females have gray undersides. All purple martins have fanned tails.
- They are 7 to 8 inches long with wingspans of 15 to 16 inches.
- Many people provide nesting habitats for Purple Martins by building and erecting multiple-unit bird houses. Purple Martins also nest in abandoned woodpecker nests.
- Purple Martins mate for life, and both parents feed and care for the young.
- Purple martins are carnivorous. They eat flying insects which they catch in flight. They eat dragonflies, flies, bees, flying ants and other flying insects.

Bird

Robin

R



American Robin
(*Turdus migratorius*)

Learn More About the American Robin

- Male and female robins are similar. They are gray and brown on top, with a red breast and belly. They have a dark gray head with a yellow beak. Females are paler than males.
- American Robins are 8 to 10 inches long with a 12 to 16 inch wingspan.
- They nest in shrubs and trees, on sheltered window sills, and in eaves near woodlands, fields, gardens and yards.
- The robin is omnivorous. It eats fruits, berries, earthworms, grubs and caterpillars.
- In spring, the robin is the first bird to return to many places in the north.

Bird

Duck

D



Lesser Scaup Duck or Dogree (*Aythya affinis*)

Learn More About the Lesser Scaup

- Males have a deep black head with a white and gray body. Females are brown all over with a white patch at the base of the bill.
- Adult birds are 15-18 inches long with a wing span of greater than 2 feet.
- An adult lesser scaup may pretend to be dead when grasped by a predator.
- Chicks are capable of diving underwater on the day they hatch.
- The lesser scaup is the most abundant and widespread of the diving ducks in North America.
- Lesser scaup primarily eat aquatic invertebrates like snails and mussels, but will also eat fish eggs, some injured fish, and seeds of aquatic plants.

Bird

Spoonbill

S



Roseate Spoonbill
(*Ajaia ajaja*)

Learn More About the Spoonbill

- Males and females are alike. Adults have a pink body with red highlights. They have long reddish legs. Roseate spoonbills have long, flat, spoon-shaped bills.
- Adults are 2-3 feet in length and have a wingspan of approximately 4 feet.
- The roseate spoonbill feeds by putting its beak in the water and swinging it from side to side while walking. They eat crustaceans and small fish. They are omnivorous.
- In Louisiana, roseate spoonbills are found primarily in the southwestern parishes of Cameron and Vermilion.

Bird

Swallow

S



Barn Swallow
(*Hirundo rustica*)

Learn More About the Barn Swallow

- Males and females are similar. They have a small black bill, dark orangish-brown throat and forehead, pale orange underside, and dark upper parts. They have a long deeply forked tail.
- Adults are 6 to 7 inches long with an 11 to 13 inch wingspan.
- Barn swallows are found in farm buildings and under bridges. They need mud to build their nests.
- Barn swallows are carnivorous. They eat flying insects while they are in flight. They often fly low to the ground to catch insects.

Bird

Swallow

S



Tree Swallow
(*Tachycineta bicolor*)

Learn More About the Tree Swallow

- Male tree swallows can be identified by their glossy, iridescent, dark blue or blue-green plumage. Their cheeks and entire underparts are white. Adult females resemble the males but tend to be a little more greenish.
- Adults are 5 to 6 inches long with a 12 to 13 inch wingspan.
- Tree swallows are found in open areas near water and fields, especially wooded swamps and shorelines.
- Tree swallows are omnivorous. They eat flying insects while they are in flight. They often fly low to the ground to catch insects or to munch on berries.
- The tree swallow winters farther north than any other American swallow, and it returns to its nesting grounds long before other swallows come back. Its ability to use plant foods helps it survive periods of bad weather.

Bird

Duck

D



Wood Duck
(*Aix sponsa*)

Learn More About the Wood Duck

-Males are brightly colored with green patterned heads and brightly patterned bodies. Females are a dull brown with white teardrop shaped eye patches.

- Adult birds are 19-21 inches long and have a wingspan of more than 2 feet.
- Wood ducks are found in woodlands near ponds and rivers.
- Some people consider it to be the most beautiful of all the ducks.
- The wood duck is one of several North American species that uses tree cavities near water to nest.
- Wood ducks eat mostly aquatic plants and seeds, berries and grains, and invertebrates.

Bird

Woodpecker

W



Red-headed Woodpecker
(*Melanerpes erthrocephalos*)

Learn More About the Woodpecker

- Males and females look alike. The entire head, neck, and throat are bright red. There is a contrasting white chest as well as black and white wings.
- Adults are 7-9 inches long with wingspans of approximately 17 inches.
- Woodpeckers use their sharp bills to carve out nests in dead or dying trees.
- Red-headed woodpeckers are omnivorous. They eat insects, fruit, berries, nuts and seeds. This woodpecker even stores food in cracks in wood, under bark, and in posts.

Bird

Woodpecker

W



Red-bellied Woodpecker
(*Melanerpes carolinus*)

Learn More About the Woodpecker

- The red-bellied woodpecker has a black and white barred back, which includes most of the wing.
- The red-bellied woodpecker gets its name from the small pinkish wash on its belly.
- Adults are medium-sized woodpeckers, averaging 8.5 inches long.
- Woodpeckers use their sharp bills to carve out nests in dead or dying trees found in open and swampy woodlands.
- Red-bellied woodpeckers are omnivorous. They eat beetles, grasshoppers, ants, nuts, and fruit.
- Red-bellied woodpeckers tap their bills together when they are courting.

Bird