



James Giroux



TRAVIS  
AUDUBON  
*Listen. Look. And Learn.*

# Bird Watching Basics

## Recommended Field Guides

Kenn Kaufman's *Field Guide to Birds of North America*, 2005  
National Geographic's *Birds of North America*, Sixth Edition  
David Sibley's *The Sibley Guide to Birds* Some don't like the 2nd ed.

## Binoculars Help You See The Birds Better

7x 35, 7 x 42, 8 x 40 are all good choices.  
Try them out at REI, Wild Birds Unlimited, Cabela's or at a birding festival. Evaluate for ease of use and how heavy they feel. Check websites for binocular reviews: *Eagle Optics*, *Cornell Lab of Ornithology* & *Birdwatcher's Digest*

## To Identify Birds Pay Attention To:

- Size - bigger than a ... smaller than a ...
- Bill shape, length and color
- Head - large, small, crested, eye ring, eye line
- Throat and breast
- Wings - wing bars
- Tail
- Back, rump and undertail
- Behavior
- Habitat
- And range maps!

## Expected Backyard Bird Species in Austin

*Permanent residents except as indicated. Depends on your location and proximity to preferred habitats. Visit Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds website to learn more.*

White-winged Dove

Mourning Dove

Inca Dove

Rock Pigeon

Blue Jay

Downy Woodpecker

Ladder-backed Woodpecker

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Lesser Goldfinch

Eastern Screech Owl

Great Horned Owl

Northern Cardinal

Carolina Wren

House Finch

American Robin

Black-crested Titmouse

Great-tailed Grackle

European Starling

House Sparrow

Northern Mockingbird

Bewick's Wren

Yellow-rumped Warbler - winter

Cedar Waxwing - winter

Ruby-crowned Kinglet - winter



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## Learn Bird Songs

There are many apps and CDs available. Here are a few suggestions.

- *Bird Tunes* app for smart phone  
[itunes.apple.com/us/app/birdtunes/id375875226?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/birdtunes/id375875226?mt=8)
- *iBird Pro Guide to Birds* – A field guide at your smart phone fingertips!  
[ibird.com/app/iphone](http://ibird.com/app/iphone)
- *Know Your Bird Sounds, Volume 1: Songs and Calls of Yard, Garden and City Birds*  
by Lang Elliott
- *Know Your Bird Sounds, Volume 2: Songs and Calls of Birds of the Countryside*  
by Lang Elliott
- *Birding by Ear* CDs by Dick Walton and Robert Lawson

## Attract Birds To Your Backyard

Provide food, clean shallow water, shelter and places to raise young.

- Use the *Grow Green Guide, Native and Adapted Landscape Plants*, and select native Texas plants, which support the insects many birds depend on.  
[www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Watershed/growgreen/plantguide.pdf](http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Watershed/growgreen/plantguide.pdf)
- *Travis Audubon Society* – Bird plant recommendations and hummingbird specific plant list.  
[travisaudubon.org/conservation/urban-habitat-committee/bird-friendly-habitats](http://travisaudubon.org/conservation/urban-habitat-committee/bird-friendly-habitats)
- *Wildlife Austin* – Support Austin's efforts to connect people with nature by gardening for wildlife. Certify your yard and educate others.  
[www.austintexas.gov/department/wildlife-austin](http://www.austintexas.gov/department/wildlife-austin)

## Bird Identification

- *Merlin* – download the free app to your Ipad or Iphone and it will help identify birds based on their color, size and your location.  
[itunes.apple.com/us/app/merlin-bird-id-by-cornell/id773457673?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/merlin-bird-id-by-cornell/id773457673?mt=8)
- *Audubon Birds Pro* – [www.audubonguides.com/field-guides/bird-identification-app.html](http://www.audubonguides.com/field-guides/bird-identification-app.html)
- *The Sibley eGuide to Birds* – [www.sibleyguides.com/about/the-sibley-eguide-to-birds-app](http://www.sibleyguides.com/about/the-sibley-eguide-to-birds-app)
- *Birdsnap* – Free app that uses visual recognition technology from photos you upload to make bird ID suggestions [itunes.apple.com/us/app/birdsnap/id880461148?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/birdsnap/id880461148?mt=8)



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## Websites

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has many resources, and all are excellent. They include

- *All About Birds* – [www.allaboutbirds.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1189](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1189)
- *eBird* – The go-to website to get info on hotspots, what is being seen, bird occurrence and to keep track of your sightings. Contribute to citizen science. [ebird.org/content/ebird](http://ebird.org/content/ebird)
- *Nestwatch and Project Feederwatch* are other citizen science projects sponsored by Cornell.

Facebook Birds of Texas group [www.facebook.com/groups/birdsoftexas](http://www.facebook.com/groups/birdsoftexas) Click on join. You can ask for ID help here.

Travis Audubon Society, [travisaudubon.org](http://travisaudubon.org) Join us for free field trips, classes and meetings.

## Magazines

- *Bird Watcher's Digest* – Human interest stories, and not too technical with great bird-attracting advice. Excellent for beginners. [www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/index.aspx](http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/index.aspx)
- *Living Bird* – Cornell Lab of Ornithology's amazing magazine. The photography is stellar and the stories are compelling. [www.allaboutbirds.org/page.aspx?pid=1173](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/page.aspx?pid=1173)
- *Audubon* – The monthly magazine of National Audubon gives you the broader context of birds in the USA. [www.audubonmagazine.org](http://www.audubonmagazine.org)
- *10,000 Birds* – A wealth of wonderful poetry all at your fingertips  
[10000birds.com/bird-poems](http://10000birds.com/bird-poems)

## Listserv For Learning About Texas Birds – Texbirds

Take your Texas bird watching experience to a whole new level. The free statewide Texbirds listserv has a wealth of information about recent sightings around the state, as well as discussions on difficult identifications, occurrence and distribution of Texas birds.

[moonmountaingroup.com/texbirds/index.html#subscribe](http://moonmountaingroup.com/texbirds/index.html#subscribe)

## Other Texas Birding Groups

The Williamson Audubon Group has a Meetup page, frequent local field trips, and quarterly meetings. The Texas Ornithological Society has twice yearly meetings which feature lots of birdwatching in locations around Texas.

*Compiled by Jane Tillman 2/15/2015*