



Bird Watching Basics



**TRAVIS
AUDUBON**
Listen. Look. And Learn.

Bird Identification

To identify birds, pay attention to details including:

- Size – bigger than a ... smaller than a ...
- Bill shape, length and color
- Head – large, small, crested, eye ring, eye line
- Throat and breast – spotted, streaked
- Wings – wing bars present or absent
- Tail – length, whether forked or notched
- Back, rump and under tail colors
- Behavior, such as wing flicking or tail bobbing
- Habitat (urban, woodland, wetlands, etc.)
- Range maps which show distribution across U.S.

Binoculars Help You See The Birds Better

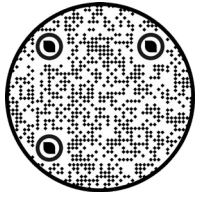
7 x 35 and 8 x 42 are both good choices. The first number refers to magnification and the second number refers to the diameter of the objective lens in millimeters. Try them out at retail locations or at a birding festival. Evaluate for factors like clarity of image, ease of use, and comfort. Check websites for binocular reviews: *The Audubon Guide to Binoculars* and *Bird Watcher's Digest* are reputable sources.

Recommended Print Field Guides

- *National Geographic's Birds of North America, Seventh Edition* by Jonathan Alderfer and Jon Dunn
- *The Sibley Guide to Birds, Second Edition* by David Allen Sibley
- *Field Guide to Birds of North America* by Kenn Kaufman
- *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Eastern North America* by Nathan Pieplow
- *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Western North America* by Nathan Pieplow

Identification Apps for Smart Phones and/or Tablets

- **Merlin** – a free app from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It will help identify birds based on their color, size, habitat, behavior and your location. Photo and sound identification are newer helpful features.
- **Audubon Bird Guide App** – a free app from the National Audubon Society.
- **Sibley Birds 2nd Edition** – this app allows you to compare two species side by side.



Scan for links!

Websites

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

- **All About Birds** – learn more about birds of interest.
- **eBird** – The go-to website to get information on places to go birding, recent bird sightings, bird distribution, and to keep track of your sightings, while contributing to citizen science.
- **Nestwatch and Project Feederwatch** – Learn more about appropriate nest boxes for species, and what and how to feed birds safely.

Attract Birds To Your Backyard

Provide food, clean shallow water, shelter and places to raise young. Natural food provided by native plants, whether it is the insects the plant supports, or the seeds, nuts, nectar, foliage, or fruits the plant provides are the sustainable way to feed the birds.

- **Check out Travis Audubon's** bird habitat plant recommendations to attract songbirds and hummingbirds.
- **Select Texas native plants.** Visit the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Native Plant Information Network website to learn about the native plants of your area. Attend a Native Plant Society of Texas Native Landscape Certification Program class to get started.
- **Certify your yard** as a Certified Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation and educate your neighbors.
- **Learn about other actions you can take** to keep birds safe and healthy in the Bird Friendly Communities section of the Travis Audubon website.

Expected Backyard Bird Species in the Austin Area

Permanent residents live here year-round. The variety of species depends on your location and proximity to preferred habitats. To learn more about the seasonal distribution of the species recorded in the Austin, TX region, get a copy of the Travis Audubon checklist.

Rock Pigeon
 Inca Dove
 White-winged Dove
 Mourning Dove
 Eastern Screech-Owl
 Great Horned Owl
 Golden-fronted Woodpecker
 Red-bellied Woodpecker
 Downy Woodpecker

Ladder-backed Woodpecker
 Blue Jay
 Woodhouse's Scrub Jay
 Carolina Chickadee
 Black-crested Titmouse
 Tufted x Black-crested Titmouse (hybrid)
 Carolina Wren
 Bewick's Wren

European Starling
 Northern Mockingbird
 American Robin
 House Sparrow
 House Finch
 Lesser Goldfinch
 Great-tailed Grackle
 Northern Cardinal