

Tips on identifying birds

To watch and learn about birds, you need only a few tools:

- **Binoculars** — Obtain a pair of binoculars and practice using these on moving objects.
- **Field guide** — Find a field guide that illustrates and describes birds of the region. Study the guide before you go out in the field to familiarize yourself with the various shapes and sizes of different types of birds, their behavior, calls and songs, and habitat requirements.
- **Checklist** — Pick up a checklist of birds in your area. This list can help you to focus on birds you are more likely to see.
- **Feeding station** — If possible, start a feeding station at your home to begin learning about the birds. Windows make a great blind for watching birds at close range. Soon, birds lose their fear of movement and you can study them at length. (Do not feed birds in wild habitats or give them human food.)
- **As you watch birds, try to disturb them as little as possible.**



Photo: Colleen Adams-Schuppe

The Yakima Valley Audubon Society fosters environmental awareness and a conservation ethic among our citizens. It promotes protection of the special and very diverse habitats, from the arid shrub-steppe upwards through the varied forest ecosystems on the Cascade east slopes to the snowy mountain crests. For further information about birding this area or to become a member visit www.yakimaaudubon.org or e-mail birds@yakimaaudubon.org.



The Yakima Area Arboretum also fosters an appreciation for environmental and community stewardship. Located at the northeast corner of the junction between Interstate 82 and HWY24/Nob Hill Blvd, it is adjacent to the Yakima River and Buchanan Lake. The Arboretum grounds are open from dawn until dusk seven days a week and the Jewett Interpretive Center is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. There is no charge to visit the Arboretum but donations are gladly accepted. Please visit www.ahntrees.org or call **509-248-7337** for more information. Maps and birdlists are posted on this website, and field guides are available at the Arboretum gift shop.

Birding the Yakima Area Arboretum



The Yakima Area Arboretum offers visitors excellent opportunities to view and learn about the various species of birds and other wildlife that can be found in our region. The Arboretum contains several very different habitats including tall cottonwoods and other riparian vegetation along the Yakima River, ornamental plantings (including the “hawthorn grove”), adjacent Buchanan Lake, and acres of manicured lawns and gardens. A specially erected bird blind along the wetland trail allows close views of many birds feeding.

This pamphlet identifies 36 of the most common species you might see while visiting the Yakima Area Arboretum. Some are resident species, living here year-round, while others are migrants, seen only in spring or fall. Still others are seen here only during the winter months.

Where to watch for birds at the Arboretum

One of the best areas to watch birds at the Yakima Area Arboretum is the natural area on the east side. Within this woodland, a manmade blind allows close observation of birds feeding. This feeder is stocked with seed October through March. The raised dike by the Yakima River at the Arboretum’s north end overlooks Buchanan Lake, a good spot for viewing waterbirds.

There is a lot of wildlife around the Jewett Pond. A bench to sit on and nearby flowering plants make it a good spot to sit and relax with a pair of binoculars.

The 10 mile long Yakima Greenway pathway also passes through the Arboretum for easy access to more bird viewing opportunities.

Finally, the hawthorn grove just north of the interpretive center attracts thrushes and waxwings in winter.

Use the check boxes to record your bird sightings.

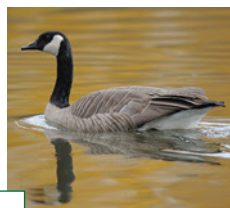


Photo: George Vlahakis

Canada Goose — This familiar waterfowl grazes on the lawns and nests by ponds or marshes. Comes in various subspecies, ranging in weight from 4 to 11 pounds.

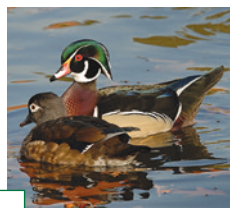


Photo: Mike Roper

Wood Duck — Males are beautifully patterned, females much plainer in appearance. Nests in cavities in trees. After hatching, the chicks jump from the nest to the ground and follow their mom.



Photo: Mike Roper

Mallard — Our most familiar duck, goes “quack, quack.” A “puddle duck,” it feeds on underwater vegetable matter by tipping its tail up. This photo shows a female. The males have a bright green head, pale body and orange bill.



Photo: Charles Crandall

California Quail — Often heard before seen, calling “Chi-ca-go.” Males have a prominent forward-curving topknot; females have a more subtle plumage with a smaller topknot. Easily attracted to feeders. In flocks (called coveys) for most of the year; only in pairs when nesting.

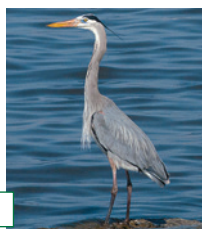


Photo: Jan Gano

Great Blue Heron — Look for this imposing bird, with long, spindly legs and a snake-like neck, stalking fish in the pond or river. In winter, also hunts for mice in open fields. Nests in colonies hidden high in cottonwoods.



Photo: Denny Granstrand

Osprey — This is a large hawk, white below, dark above with a five-foot wingspan. Look for it from April to October, hovering over quiet waters, scanning for fish, then plunging feet first into the water to catch them. Their bulky nests on poles are fixtures around the valley.

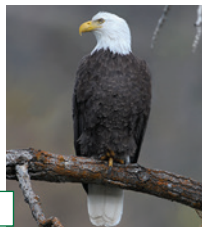


Photo: George Vlahakis

Bald Eagle — Look for this majestic bird mostly in the winter. Adults are unmistakable with white heads and tails. Younger birds, up to 5 years of age, are brown. Preys on fish and water birds, also eating carrion.



Photo: Denny Granstrand

Sharp-shinned Hawk — Mostly noted in winter, the “Sharpie” preys on small birds which it ambushes from a hiding spot in thick branches. You might find this bird in the trees above the bird blind or a feeder, scouting out its next meal.



Photo: George Vlahakis

Red-tailed Hawk — Large hawk with broad wings, wide tail and dark “belly band.” Only adults have red tails. Preys on small mammals. Hunts while soaring or from a tree branch or power pole.



Photo: Charles Crandall

American Kestrel — Our smallest falcon. Males have bluish wings, females are more brown. Hunts by hovering in one spot over open terrain or from a perch. Preys mainly on mice, small birds and large insects. Noisy and excitable.



Photo: George Vlahakis

Killdeer — The only shorebird with two bands on its breast. Calls its name “kill-deer” as it runs around open fields. Nests on bare ground, distracting enemies with a broken wing act.



Photo: Denny Granstrand

Mourning Dove — Dainty dove with a pointed tail and brownish to rosy, iridescent plumage. Attracted to feeders. Calls consist of gentle mournful cooing notes.



Photo: Denny Granstrand

Western Screech-Owl — Look for this small “eared” owl at the entrance of its nest cavity in a big cottonwood tree. At night, it utters a distinctive mellow “bouncing ball” song. Feeds on mice, frogs and large insects.



Photo: Denny Granstrand

Great Horned Owl — This is the familiar “hoot owl,” calling a deep “whu-whoo-whoo-whoo,” most often at dusk and dawn. Hides by day in the tall cottonwoods. This formidable predator captures rabbits, skunks and large rodents (and cats).

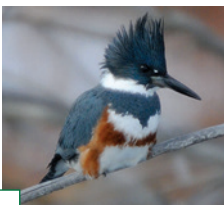


Photo: George Vlahakis

Belted Kingfisher — Recognizable by its “bad hair day,” blue gray upperparts, and band across its belly. Perches above a quiet slough or pond. Hovers, then dives headfirst for small fish. Has a staccato rattling call.



Photo: Mike Roper

Downy Woodpecker — A small black and white woodpecker. Males have a small red patch on the back of their head. Favors big trees in riparian groves. Listen for its high pitched rattle and “pic” calls.



Photo: George Vlahakis

Northern Flicker — In flight, this big woodpecker flashes salmon red underwings and tail, and a white rump, making it distinctive. Spends more time on the ground than many woodpeckers, foraging for ants. Call a loud “klee-yer.” An important excavator of cavities for the many species dependent on this feature for nests or roost sites.



Photo: Jan Gano

Black-billed Magpie — A striking and long-tailed jay-like bird, it looks like it is wearing a tuxedo with black upper and white under parts. In sunlight, the wings and tail shine iridescent greens, blues, and purples. Raucous and mischievous.



Photo: Denny Granstrand

Tree Swallow — Iridescent blue-backed swallow. An early returning migrant from the south. Uses cavities in trees and manmade boxes for its nest site. Flies all day long, snatching insects from the air.



Photo: Mike Roper

Barn Swallow — Usually nests around buildings; look under eaves for their attached mud nests. This insect-eating bird has a forked tail, metallic blue upperparts, orange underparts and soft, twittering calls.



Photo: Charles Crandall

Black-capped Chickadee — An endearing and hearty little mite, this bird survives the coldest winter days gleaning for dormant insects in bark and branch furrows. Also visits the feeding station. Song in spring a pleasing “hey, sweetie.” Its call, given all year, the familiar “chick-a-dee-dee.”



Photo: Jan Gano

American Robin — Our most familiar thrush, the songster that wakes you before dawn in spring. Often seen on lawns, seeking earthworms and insects. Also eats fruits and berries.



Photo: Denny Granstrand

Varied Thrush — Strictly a winter visitor, look for this handsome orange and black thrush in the hawthorn grove. Breeds in wet mountain forests to the west and north.



Photo: Charles Crandall

European Starling — A bird introduced from Eurasia, this adaptable and resourceful species has spread all across North America and competes with native species for nesting cavities. This photo shows the speckled winter plumage, but they become shiny black in spring.



Photo: Jan Gano

Cedar Waxwing — Sleek and handsome, sporting a distinctive crest and black mask. Look for them plucking berries in the hawthorn grove. (In winter a few larger, grayer waxwings will appear. These are the Bohemian Waxwings from far to the north.)



Photo: Mike Roper

Yellow-rumped Warbler — Breeding males are brightly patterned, young birds and females duller, but all have a yellow “butter-butt.” Winter visitor. In cold weather, diet switches from insects to russian olive berries.



Photo: George Vlahakis

Spotted Towhee — Strikingly patterned large sparrow, most often noted scratching the ground for seeds at the feeding station. Listen for its distinctive catlike “mew” call.



Photo: Charles Crandall

Song Sparrow — Typically a sparrow that stays hidden in the dense riparian brush. Easy to see in the open at the feeding station. Look for the distinctive spot on its breast and gray and brown striped head.



Photo: Jan Gano

White-crowned Sparrow — A smartly patterned sparrow with white and black crown stripes in adults that are tan and brown in young birds. A visitor from the north from September through April. Easy to see at the feeding station.



Photo: George Vlahakis

Dark-eyed Junco — Some call this sparrow the “Snowbird.” It is present from October through March when snow covers the ground in the mountains or the far North where they breed. Look for juncos particularly at the feeding station.



Photo: George Vlahakis

Black-headed Grosbeak — This very striking visitor spends most of the year in the tropics, coming north May through August to breed. Its song is similar to a Robin’s, but more melodious.



Photo: Charles Crandall

Red-winged Blackbird — Familiar and easy to recognize, this blackbird usually lives in marshes. It is attracted to the feeding station. Females are not black but rather dark brown and streaked below.



Photo: Jan Gano

Bullock’s Oriole — This is another visitor from the tropics, spending most of the year in Mexico, coming north May through August to breed. Female orioles are much less brightly colored. Look for their sock-shaped hanging nests hidden among the tall trees, more obvious in winter when the trees are leafless.



Photo: Mike Roper

House Finch — The American West’s most familiar yard bird. Even tiny patches of shrubbery or trees in Yakima host this finch. Easy to see at the feeding station. Males are distinctive with red on the head, breast, and rump, while females are light brown and streaked below.



Photo: George Vlahakis

American Goldfinch — Washington’s state bird. Males are brilliant yellow in summer, but duller in winter, resembling the females. Relishes thistle seeds.



Photo: Mike Roper

House Sparrow — Look for this bird at the feeding station. Introduced in the 1800s from Asia and Europe, now found across North America in cities or towns. Actually not a sparrow, but a weaver finch, a large family found mostly in Africa and Asia.