


# Birds of the Blue Ridge Mountains



Northern Flicker  
*Colaptes auratus*

Depending on the season, over 200 species of birds can be found in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Use this brochure to discover how you can identify birds with clues such as location, behavior, size, shape and field marks.

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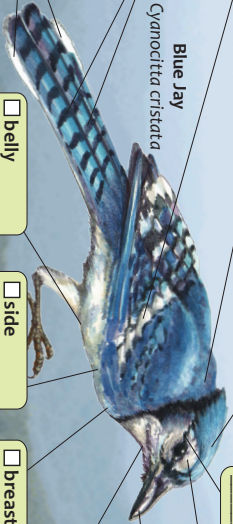
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### Field Marks

In addition to size, shape, location and behavior, field marks can be used to help identify birds. If you can't identify a bird in the field, remembering what certain parts of the bird looked like can help you identify it when you get home. On your birding adventure, find a bird and try to answer as many of these field mark questions as you can:



Blue Jay  
*Cyanocitta cristata*

- wing bars**  
Does the bird have white edges on its tail or a different color on the tip?
- tail bars**  
Are there any stripes across the bird's tail?
- tail markings**  
Does the bird have white edges on its tail or a different color on the tip?
- belly**  
What color is the bird's belly?
- nape**  
What color is the bird's nape?
- side**  
What color is the bird's side?
- breast**  
What color is the bird's breast?
- eyebrow**  
Does the bird have an eyebrow? What color?
- eyestripe**  
Does the bird have a stripe through the eye?
- throat**  
What color is the bird's throat?
- beak or bill**  
What shape and color are the beak?
- crown**  
What shape and color are the crown?

## What kind of bird is that...

When trying to identify a bird, the first things to look for are location and behavior. Is the bird up high making noise, or on the ground digging in leaves? Next, think about size and shape. Is it big like a crow, or small like a sparrow? Does it have pointy wings, or a long tail? Finally, you can use field marks to identify birds – flip to the back panel to discover how!

### in the trees?

Almost all the birds of the Blue Ridge use trees and shrubs for food, shelter, or nesting. Woodpeckers and chickadees make their nests in the cavities of trees and pick insects from the bark. Trees can provide seeds and berries for birds such as cardinals and goldfinches to eat. **Look into the trees. How many different birds can you find? \_\_\_\_\_ What parts of the tree are the birds using? \_\_\_\_\_**



Downy Woodpecker  
*Picoides pubescens*

Carolina Chickadee  
*Poecile carolinensis*



Northern Cardinal  
*Cardinalis cardinalis*

American Goldfinch  
*Carduelis tristis*



### in the air?

Birds that spend a lot of time in the air use their strong eyesight to find food. Hawks, crows and vultures can usually be found perched or circling up high as they search for their next meal. **Scan the sky over fields and through openings in the trees. Are there any large birds flying overhead? \_\_\_\_\_ Are they flapping or gliding? \_\_\_\_\_**



Turkey Vulture  
*Cathartes aura*

Red-tailed Hawk  
*Buteo jamaicensis*



American Crow  
*Corvus brachyrhynchos*



### on the ground?

Birds that feed on the ground usually specialize in catching bugs or finding seeds. American Robins use their beaks to pull earthworms from the ground. Juncos and towhees scratch through leaves to uncover fallen seeds and berries. Mourning doves peck insects and seeds from gravelly areas. **Check the ground near trail, stream and field edges. How many different birds can you find? \_\_\_\_\_ Can you tell what they are eating? \_\_\_\_\_**



American Robin  
*Turdus migratorius*



Eastern Towhee  
*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*



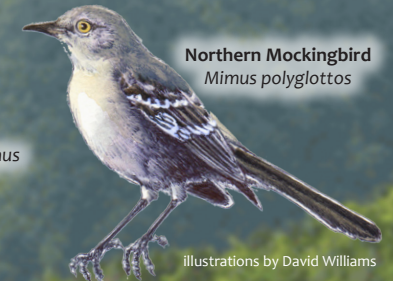
Dark-eyed Junco  
*Junco hyemalis*



Mourning Dove  
*Zenaidura macroura*



Carolina Wren  
*Thryothorus ludovicianus*



Northern Mockingbird  
*Mimus polyglottos*

### making noise?

Birds make all kinds of noises – some sing to attract a mate, while others will call attention to food, danger or territory. Carolina wrens are known for their loud, cheerful song and chattering sounds. Northern mockingbirds can imitate hundreds of different sounds, and will sometimes sing at night! **Close your eyes and listen for one minute. How many different birds can you hear around you? \_\_\_\_\_**

illustrations by David Williams