

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

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



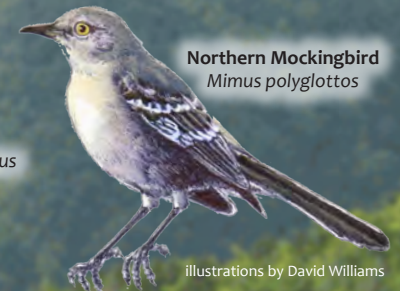
Dark-eyed Junco
Junco hyemalis



Mourning Dove
Zenaidura macroura



Carolina Wren
Thryothorus ludovicianus



Northern Mockingbird
Mimus polyglottos

illustrations by David Williams

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

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? ____**

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:

☐ **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?

☐ **side**
What color is the bird's side?

☐ **breast**
What color is the bird's breast?

☐ **throat**
What color is the bird's throat?

☐ **wing bars**
Does the bird have wing bars?

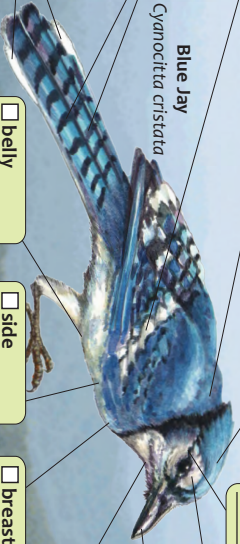
☐ **nape**
What color is the bird's nape?

☐ **crown**
What shape and color are the crown?

☐ **eyestripe**
Does the bird have a stripe through the eye?

☐ **eyebrow**
Does the bird have an eyebrow? What color?

☐ **beak or bill**
What shape and color are the beak?



Blue Jay
Cyanocitta cristata

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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.