

Backyard Birds

A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Birds of Wisconsin

Garden Resources

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Welcome! Please meet common birds of Wisconsin that are accepting invitations to backyards. Learn how to successfully attract any of your favorite red, yellow, blue, spotted or striped small birds at our [Backyard Birds](#) resource page and [Seed Popularity Ratings if Birds Could Vote](#). Then keep using this pictorial guide to help you compare, contrast and identify WI native and common migratory birds that visit your yard with side-by-side views of similar birds. Most of these birds live and breed in suburban areas. Discover which birds migrate to southern WI in summer or winter. Have fun!

*Summer Migrants

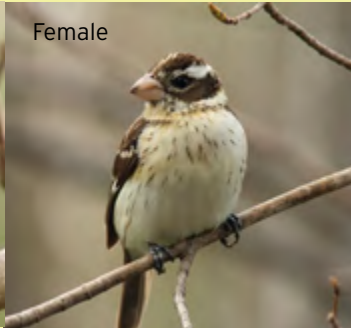
+Winter Migrants in SE WI

*Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*)

Male

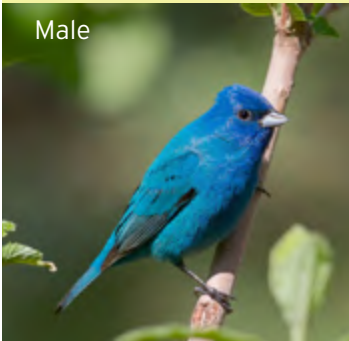


Female

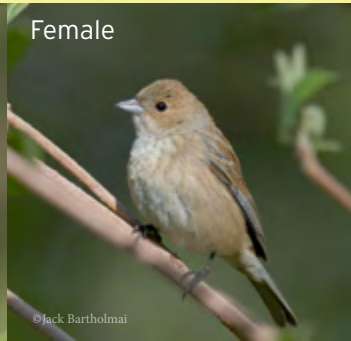


*Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)

Male



Female



*American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)

Male

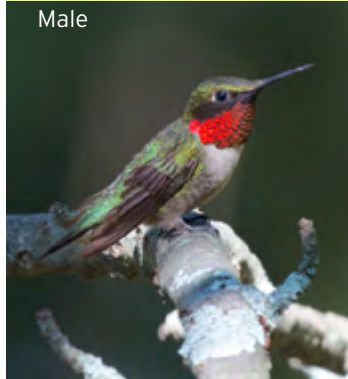


Female

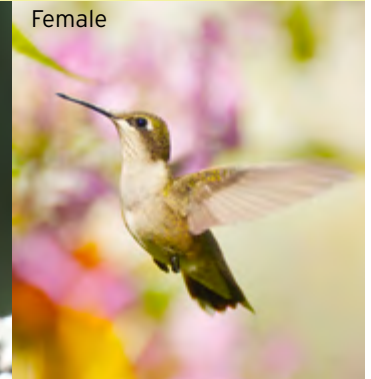


*Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*)

Male



Female

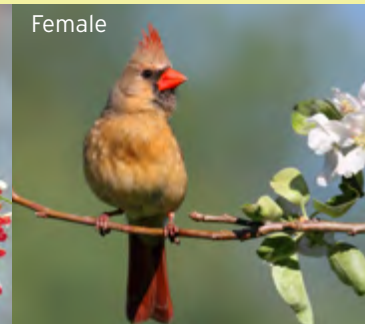


Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

Male

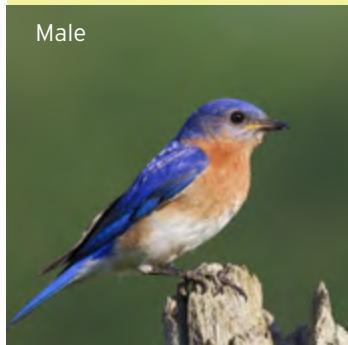


Female

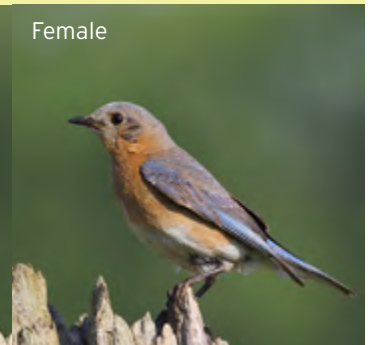


*Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*)

Male



Female



Indigo Buntings, N. Cardinals and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are members of the Cardinalidae family. Robins and Bluebirds are both Thrushes.

Eastern Bluebirds prefer open fields to the city and are not commonly found at feeders. If you live near a park, field or golf course, you may attract bluebirds with a bluebird house.

Male robins have solid black caps that sharply contrast with their gray back feathers. Females' caps transition from black to gray, blending in with their back feathers.

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Downy Woodpeckers commonly mix with songbirds at feeders. In winter, they flock with Chickadees, Nuthatches and Titmice.

Male and female Chickadees, Nuthatches, Titmice and Wrens look identical. Males may be slightly larger.

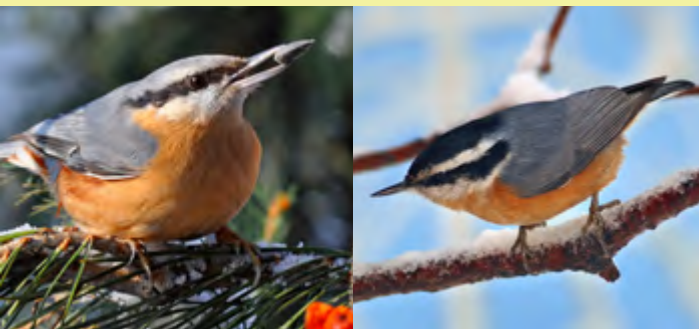
Red-breasted Nuthatches are irruptive species. Their flocks change territories sporadically, and they may not reside in the same area from year-to-year. Red-breasted Nuthatches may be present in WI year-round except for the southern most counties, including Milwaukee, where they are non-breeding winter migrants.

Tufted Titmice are found primarily in southwest WI. Dark-eyed Juncos breed in NE WI and migrate throughout WI for winter.

Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*)



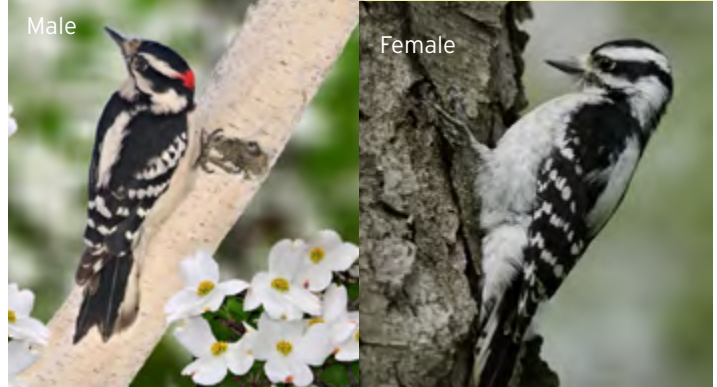
+Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*)



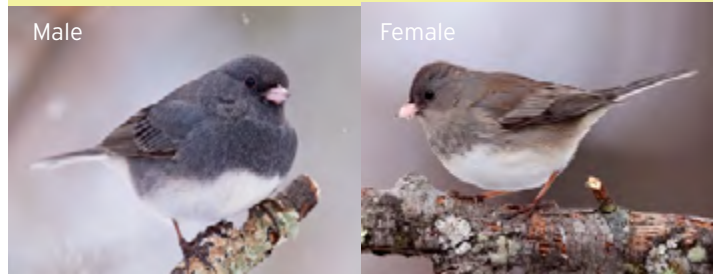
White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*)



Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*)



+Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*)



Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*)



*House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)



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American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*)

Male



Female



Goldfinches can always be identified by their white or pale wing bars. During breeding, male American Goldfinches look bright yellow with a black cap, and females are paler yellow with no cap. They both look grayish-brown in winter with males showing some yellow and no cap. Birds transitioning to adulthood look mottled.

Male House Finches have orangish-red coloring on their heads, throats and breasts and heavy brown streaking on their flanks. Male Purple Finches have no flank streaking. Streaking and face patterns of female Purple Finches are more distinct than female House Finches. Purple Finches may migrate south to Milwaukee and SW WI in winter.

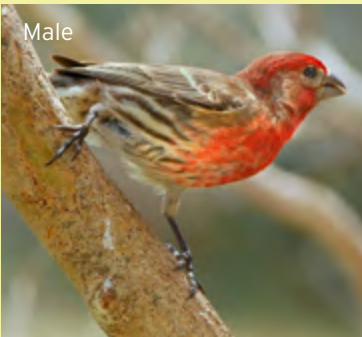
Song Sparrows have darker streaking around pale streaked white breasts compared to female finches. Sparrows have smaller, pointier bills than finches' thick, conical bills. Males and females look alike.

American Tree and Chipping Sparrows can be differentiated by the color of their eye stripe. Males and females look alike.

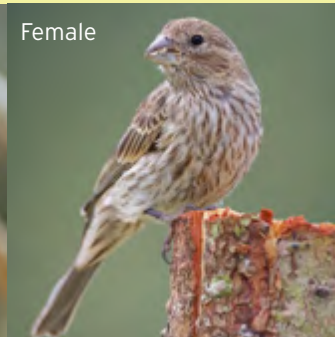
Male House Sparrows have black masks and throats, gray caps and rufous napes. Females are grayish-brown with no distinct markings.

House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*)

Male

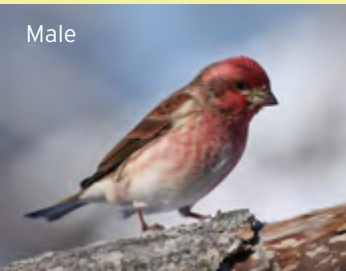


Female

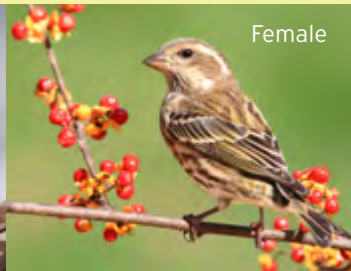


+Purple Finch (*Haemorhous purpureus*)

Male

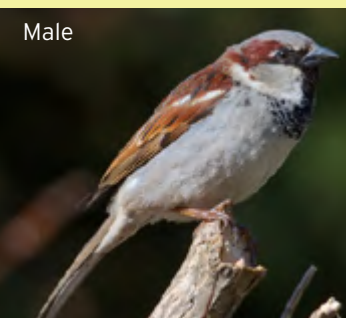


Female

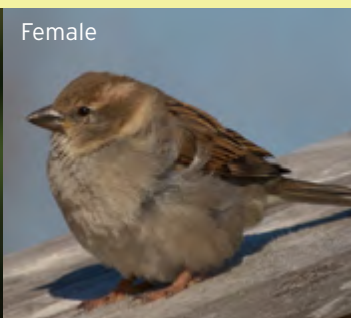


House Sparrow (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) Invasive Species!

Male



Female



Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)



+American Tree Sparrow (*Spizella arborea*)



*Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*)



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Jays, crows and ravens belong to the Corvidae family of songbirds. Ravens are about 1/3 larger than crows and twice as heavy. They have broader beaks and longer tail and wing feathers. Their shaggy throat feathers, when fluffed out, are a key I.D. feature. Unlike social crows, ravens are usually seen alone or in pairs in northern and western WI.

Purple Martins are a type of swallow. Cedar Waxwings are related to one other waxwing. Martins and waxwings are both social birds that eat, nest and roost in large groups. They are both acrobatic insect eaters. Waxwings are found around fruiting plants.

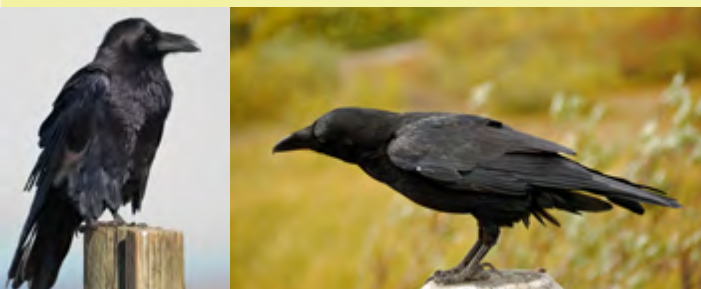
Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*)



American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)



Common Raven (*Corvus corax*)



Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)



Purple Martin (*Progne subis*)



Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*)



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*Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*)

Male



Female



*Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

Male



Female



*Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*)

Male



Female



Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

Male



Female



Orioles, grackles and cowbirds are all members of the blackbird family Icteridae with characteristically long, pointed bills. Baltimore Orioles are beloved backyard visitors for their vibrant orange coloring.

Brewer's and Red-winged Blackbirds, cowbirds, grackles and starlings flock together in huge numbers. These ground-feeders are considered pests of grain crops. All but Red-winged Blackbirds appear solid black from a distance.

Brewer's Blackbirds are shiny black but may appear green, blue or purple. They are the size of a Robin and have long tails. Males have yellow eyes. Females are a dull grayish-brown with dark eyes.

Brown-headed Cowbirds are stockier with shorter legs, tails and bills. Their thicker, finch-like bills are a key I.D. feature.

Grackles are larger, longer and appear metallic green, blue, purple and bronze in sunlight. Males have yellow eyes. Females are browner and less iridescent. Rounded tails are a key I.D. feature.

Female Red-winged Blackbirds look similar to Song Sparrows but are much larger with orangish throats and thicker, darker streaking. They prefer moist areas with open fields or lawns.

Male and female European Starlings look alike. They are iridescent green and purple with yellow beaks in summer and become spotted in winter.

*Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*)

Male



Female



European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) **Invasive Species!**

