



How to...



WOW!

A woodpecker can drum a tree up to 12,000 times in a single day.

Give bird-watching a try

Discover the busy lives of our feathered friends.

A fascinating world of birds is just outside your door. You can find out more about the lives of these neighborhood nesters with the popular hobby of bird-watching. "Bird-watching is a treasure hunt that never ends!" says Luc Ward, an ornithologist (scientist who studies birds) and the author of *The Backyard Bird Watching Book for Kids*. "It's a hobby built on values like respect for nature and protecting endangered species." Here are tips for beginner bird-watchers.

Be bird-friendly

You can attract birds with native flowering plants and a shallow dish of clean water. You can also talk to your family about putting up a bird feeder filled with safflower or thistle seed or hanging a bird house (also called a nest box) where birds may lay their eggs. You could also put orange slices on a plate to draw birds. If you have a cat, keep it inside—cats are one of the biggest dangers to birds.

Get up early

The best time of day to see and hear many birds is the morning, when male birds call to defend their territory and attract mates. The American robin, a gray-brown

bird with an orange-red breast, is found throughout most of the US and is often one of the first birds to sing in the morning. You may hear its whistles in a cadence that sounds like *cheerily, cheer up, cheer up, cheerily, cheer up* and spot it hopping on the ground looking for insects.

Notice details

For any bird you see, take note of its features with your naked eye or binoculars. This will help you identify it. Is the bird's bill thick for cracking seeds or pointed for catching bugs? Are there identifying "field marks," like a stripe over the eye or a white flash in a tail? Observe the bird's behavior too. You may see a nuthatch creeping headfirst down a tree or a hummingbird flying backward. To learn more, borrow a bird guide from the library. The free Merlin Bird ID app can also be helpful.



Check out new settings.

Explore habitats

Different habitats, such as a stream, woods, or an open field, provide different food, shelter, and nesting spots. With an adult's help, plan to bird-watch in various settings. You can then share your notes on the eBird app, where Cornell University scientists use observations from bird-watchers to track and help protect birds.

Summer songbirds



See if you're able to spot one of these birds outdoors.

American goldfinch In the summer, the male (above left) is hard to miss. It's bright yellow with a black cap and wings. In winter, its feathers turn brown. Females are a more muted olive.

Eastern bluebird The male (middle) has a brilliant blue back and head and a red-brown breast, while females are more gray with blue in the wings and tail.

Western tanager Males are a stunning yellow (right) with a red head and black wings, and females are a dimmer yellow-green with dark wings.