

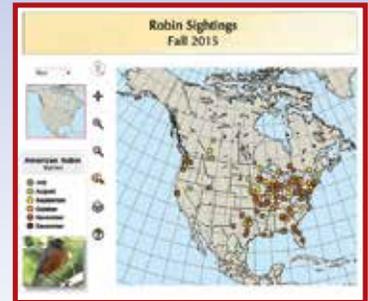
# What makes a bird a bird?

While there are roughly 10,000 species of birds worldwide, they all share some common traits. For example, birds are covered with feathers rather than scales or fur. All birds, even those that are flightless, have wings. The wings of some species are only for display, but most birds use their wings to fly, and some even use them to swim. All birds have only two legs, on which they stand, walk and perch. The bones of birds are mostly hollow and lightweight, making it easier to fly. All birds have beaks or bills (their mouths), and all birds lay hard-shelled eggs.



## Where Do Birds Migrate?

People have always been curious about where birds go when they migrate. Most birds that breed in New York and other northern locations migrate—that is, fly south—for the winter. One of the longest migrations is that of the red knot, a species of shorebird. They breed in the Arctic and fly to South America for the winter! Not all birds migrate, though. Some, such as the black-capped chickadee, northern cardinal, and great horned owl, are year-round residents of our state.



Hey kids, play the Mission Migration game online at [www.audubon.org/mission-migration-game](http://www.audubon.org/mission-migration-game)

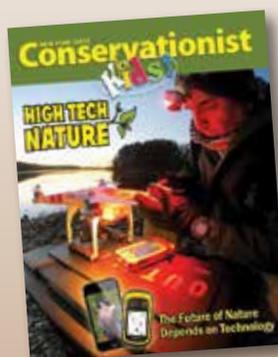
Many bird watchers and other interested people submit their observations of birds to a website called eBird. eBird is a project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society and is a valuable tool for scientists studying bird populations and migration. Anyone can submit data to eBird by going to <http://ebird.org/>.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service / Greg Brees

Another project that people can contribute observations to is Journey North. Through it, wildlife migrations are tracked, as are the changes in seasons. Many different kinds of birds are tracked on the Journey North website, [www.learner.org/jnorth/](http://www.learner.org/jnorth/).

The Cornell Lab also has a program called Merlin, an app that can be downloaded to your phone or used on their website. It's designed to help identify birds that you see, and it can be found at <http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>.



You can learn about the technology that scientists use to track birds in "High Tech Nature", the winter 2015 issue of *Conservationist for Kids*. View it on our website at [www.dec.ny.gov/education/100415.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/100415.html) or email us for copies.

