

NEW YORK STATE

CONSERVATIONIST



Scan for
Spanish
version



**BIRDS ARE
EVERYWHERE!**





Want to receive
Conservationist
for Kids at home?

**Subscribe to
Conservationist
magazine!**

You'll receive six issues of the award-winning magazine each year, plus *Conservationist for Kids* in the February, April, and October issues.

Subscribe on our website at www.dec.ny.gov or by calling **518-402-8047**.



Contact us at:

NYSDEC
Conservationist for Kids
625 Broadway 4th Floor
Albany, NY 12233-4502

kidsconservationist@dec.ny.gov
518-402-804



**THE EASTERN
BLUEBIRD**
(*Sialia sialis*) has
been the state bird
of New York State
since 1970.

In this issue, students will learn about birds, including bird communications, where birds live, and how to observe them. They will learn about different adaptations birds have, depending on their habitats and the types of foods they eat, and will discover a variety of ways that we have birds in our lives! Students will also learn all about the different ways of observing and keeping track of birds, both at school and in their own neighborhoods, and learn about some of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) birding resources.

Cover main image: Juvenile Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) by Aaron Winters

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

Different birds make different sounds. The two types of sounds birds make are songs and calls. These sounds communicate many different things.



Marsh Wren
(*Cistothorus palustris*)

Most birds are known for their songs. **They sing songs to attract mates.** You can hear many different kinds of birds singing in spring when they are hoping to find a mate and raise a family.

Birds also have calls. Calls are shorter, less musical sounds. **Birds make calls to communicate to other birds about something important.** Think about what might be important to a bird. **Hint:** the same things might be important to you:

Cornell Lab
Merlin

By learning the different songs and calls that birds make, you can start to identify different bird species. With

a little practice, you can even figure out what they are “saying”! There are free apps available to help identify birds based on their sounds. One of the most popular is the Merlin app, created by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Go to <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org> to learn more about the free Merlin app.



A BIRD SAYS:

Stay with your group.

A TEACHER SAYS:

Walk together in a line.

A BIRD SAYS:

There's food here.

A TEACHER SAYS:

It's lunch time.

A BIRD SAYS:

Warning, there's danger!

A FIRE ALARM:

Ring ring ring!



SURPRISE AN ADULT WITH THIS FUN FACT: “Ornis” means birds, and “ology” means the study of, so together the word ornithology means the “study of birds.”

Black-capped Chickadee
(*Poecile atricapillus*)

LIVING WITH BIRDS

Habitats are places where animals, like birds and humans, make their homes.

A healthy habitat has enough of the right kinds of food to eat, clean water to drink, and shelter that keeps animals safe. **Birds are your neighbors**, whether you live in the city or the country, by fields or forests, or by lakes or the seashore.

To live in these different habitats, birds need special abilities and features, or adaptations, that help them survive. Sometimes adaptations are a behavior (something they do), and some are a feature of their body (like a special wing shape or beak shape). What are some ways that you think animals could find food, water, and shelter in the habitats below? Read on to discover some of the ways that birds adapt to different habitats. Before you read on, come up with some guesses!



Rock Dove
(*Columba livia*)



Eastern Meadowlark
(*Sturnella magna*)



Pileated Woodpecker
(*Dryocopus pileatus*)

URBAN:

We don't think of the city as natural, but there is a lot of nature and wildlife there! Are you a picky eater? Many urban birds eat a variety of foods, such as insects, seeds, fruits, and human food scraps. Pigeons and gulls are good at scavenging for food in cities. Birds in the city also adapt to human shelters, as a place to make their own. In the wild, Peregrine Falcons nest on cliffs, but in cities they are able to nest on the sides of skyscrapers and under bridges.

FIELDS:

Birds that live in fields are often adapted to eat seeds, since many of the plants in fields are grasses that produce seeds. Some of these birds include a variety of sparrows. Birds that live in fields are also adapted to building their nests on the ground or in the grasses. These include birds like Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks. Having striped or brown feathers also helps birds to blend in with the grasses and other vegetation growing in the fields.

FORESTS:

Birds that live in the forest have many adaptations to this habitat type. Many forest birds build their nests in holes in trees, or hunt for food by making holes in trees. Woodpeckers are a great example of a forest bird that hunts for insects living in trees. Lots of birds nest in tree cavities, including chickadees, woodpeckers, and even Wood Ducks! Other birds, like Eastern Bluebirds, nest in tree cavities along the edges of fields and forests. Some hawks called accipiters are adapted to living in forests, by having long tails to help them steer and shorter, broad wings to help them get around trees quickly when chasing prey. These include Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks.



Blue Jay
(*Cyanocitta cristata*)

RURAL/SUBURBS:

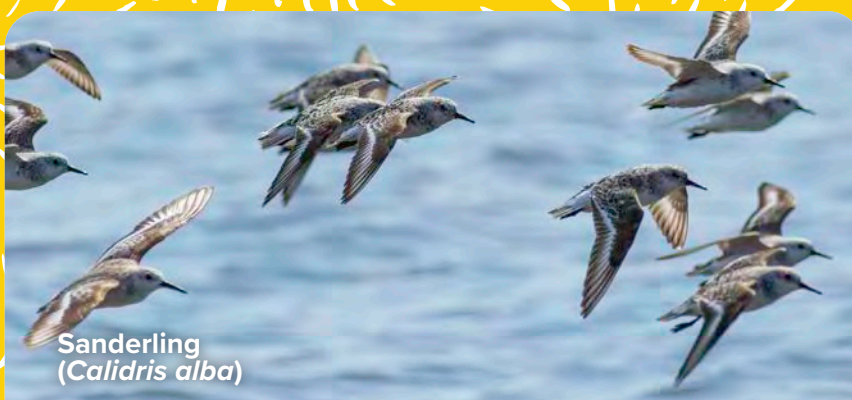
Birds that live in rural areas or in the suburbs are often birds that can live in a variety of habitats, including a mix of trees, lawns, shrubby areas, and parks. They often feed on insects and seeds, and are the kinds of birds that you can usually see visiting bird feeders or in a town park. Some of them include American Robins, crows, Blue Jays, and sparrows.



Piping Plover
(*Charadrius melodus*)

SHORELINE:

Birds that live on the shoreline usually have long legs for wading in the water, or long toes to help them walk on the sand, and long bills to help them search for food in the water or in the sand and rocks. These include sandpipers and herons. Some shoreline birds spend most of their time in the water and are good swimmers, like a variety of ducks. Many birds that live on the shoreline make their nests on the ground and have eggs that are colored to blend in with the sand and pebbles.



Sanderling
(*Calidris alba*)

Not Just Hanging Out!

Many birds are like people. They hang out and live together. Why? **Some birds are very social and live in large groups called flocks.** Some birds stay in their flock almost all of the time, while other birds gather in a flock only during certain times of the year, such as when migrating. Think of your group of friends as your flock!

Another reason birds gather together or live near each other is for safety. There is a saying called “safety in numbers” which means that it is often easier for a group to stay safer than one or two on their own. **Some birds can act as lookouts, keeping an eye out for danger, such as cats or hawks, and warn the other birds to keep them safe.** Also, if a predator is going after a flock of birds, the birds can all start moving, making it harder for the predator to single one out.

Birds also gather in groups or live near each other because it makes it easier to find the things in their habitat that they need—food, water, and shelter. One bird looking around alone might have a hard time finding what it needs, but a group of birds all looking have an easier time. Once they find food, shelter, or water, they make calls letting the others know about it. Think about how hard it is for you to find something by yourself, but how much easier it can be with friends or family helping you!



Canada Goose
(*Branta canadensis*)



American Robin
(*Turdus migratorius*)



Wild Turkey
(*Meleagris gallopavo*)



Birds In Our World

1 There are many ways people interact with birds every day, and that birds are a part of our lives, even some you might not have thought about! **People like to listen to bird songs**, and some species of birds, like canaries, are kept as pets because of the songs that they sing.

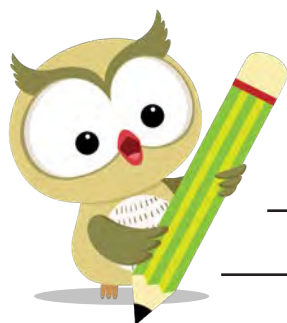
2 Birds provide many of us with food! **Lots of people like eggs for breakfast**, and eggs are an ingredient in many different foods, especially baked goods.

3 Many kinds of birds are also eaten as meals, including chickens, ducks, pheasants, and of course, turkeys! Some of these birds are raised on farms, and **others are wild and hunted during specific times of the year, called hunting seasons.**

4 In the past, many birds were hunted almost to extinction for their feathers, which were used to decorate hats. People saw how many birds were disappearing from the wild due to overhunting, and spoke out and passed laws to protect these birds. **Today, the feathers used for fashion come from birds, such as chickens, that are raised on farms.**

5 Down feathers (soft whitish feathers found beneath the outer feathers) are used in things like pillows, comforters, and **winter clothing like parkas.**

6 **Lots of people simply enjoy watching or listening to birds, which is called birding.** People watch birds at feeders, people watch birds with binoculars when they are out in nature, and people even watch television shows about birds!



Can you think of some ways how birds are a part of your life?



Bald Eagle
(*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)



WHAT CAN YOU DO?



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
(*Archilochus colubris*)

Birds are everywhere!

There are many ways people include birds in their lives or learn more about birds. Birding (bird watching) is one of the fastest growing recreational activities in the United States. **You can watch birds at your school, in your yard, on a trip, or on a hike**—birds are found almost everywhere that people go!

Take a hike

People go on hikes, go to parks, and go on trips to go birding. You can even take the DEC Birding Challenge each year, and you can win prizes for watching birds! Not sure where to go birding? **New York State has a Birding Trail, which is a series of more than 340 locations that have been selected as good places to go birding.** DEC runs the Birding Trail with many different partner organizations. To check out a place on the Trail and to learn more about the Challenge, go to: www.ibirdny.org.

Join a club

So many young people bird that there are New York Young Birders Clubs. These are groups of 10- to 17-year-olds who get together to enjoy birds. Anyone is welcome, and you don't have to know about birds to join—you just have to want to check it out. To find out if there is a club near you, check out the link: <http://nysyoungbirders.org>.

Track with an app

Logan, a teen from Albany, New York keeps a life list, or a list of all the birds he has seen. He loves the challenge of finding new birds and also likes to look back and see all of the birds he has found. **You too can keep track of the birds you have seen** using the free Merlin app: <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org>. Good luck and we hope you see a cool bird soon!

Feed the birds

You can set up bird feeders at your home or school and keep track of what kinds of birds visit your feeders. **Lots of people put up hummingbird feeders in the summer, and people put up feeders that hold seeds, suet, and fruit for other kinds of birds.** If you live in an area that has bears, DEC recommends only putting your feeders up once the bears have gone into hibernation in December, and taking them down again in the spring.

Turn out the lights

You can help keep birds safe if you live in an area where lots of birds migrate (head south in the fall and north in the spring). **Many birds migrate at night and are often confused by the bright lights from buildings.** Millions of birds die each year because of this. By turning off lights at night, you can help keep migrating birds safe!

Learn more about all of this by visiting DEC's website at: www.ibirdny.org.



Inclusive Woods & Us; equipment courtesy of REI



Did you know that the array of habitats in New York supports more than 450 different species of birds? Use your observation skills and join the I BIRD NY Challenge by identifying any 10 bird species of your choosing in New York State. Record each of your 10 observations on this entry sheet and submit it back to DEC (I BIRD NY Birding Challenge, NYSDEC, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-1020; birdingchallenge@dec.ny.gov) by 11/01/24. After successfully completing this challenge, you will be awarded a commemorative patch, given a completion certificate, and entered into a drawing for great birding prizes! **BONUS: Submit a photo documenting your I BIRD NY Challenge experience and earn an extra entry in the prize giveaway.**

Name of Birder:

Age:

Email:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

1. Name:	Date Observed:
Location:	Town/City:
2. Name:	Date Observed:
Location:	Town/City:
3. Name:	Date Observed:
Location:	Town/City:
4. Name:	Date Observed:
Location:	Town/City:
5. Name:	Date Observed:
Location:	Town/City:
6. Name:	Date Observed:
Location:	Town/City:
7. Name:	Date Observed:
Location:	Town/City:
8. Name:	Date Observed:
Location:	Town/City:
9. Name:	Date Observed:
Location:	Town/City:
10. Name:	Date Observed:
Location:	Town/City:



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

New York State Conservationist for Kids

Winter 2024, Volume 17, #2

Kathy Hochul, Governor

Basil Seggos, Commissioner

Maureen Wren, Deputy Commissioner for Public Affairs

**DEC Division of Communication,
Education, and Engagement**

Harold Evans, Director

Jeremy Taylor, Editor

J Walker, Designer

This issue is funded in part by DEC's Office of Outdoor Recreation. Special thanks to Director of Outdoor Recreation Laura DiBetta and Environmental Educator Drew Hopkins for their assistance with developing the issue.

EDITORIAL OFFICES - *Conservationist for Kids* ISSN 1940-8099, © 2024 by NYSDEC, is an official publication of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation published three times per year at 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4502, telephone (518) 402-8047. TO SUBSCRIBE TO *CONSERVATIONIST FOR KIDS*, visit the department's website at www.dec.ny.gov. *CONSERVATIONIST FOR KIDS* and the Teacher Supplement are available online at www.dec.ny.gov. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation does not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, disability, age or gender.



CONSERVATIONIST FOR KIDS

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12233-4502
P: (518) 402-8047 | F: (518) 402-9036 | kidsconservationist@dec.ny.gov
www.dec.ny.gov

Conservationist for Kids **Supplement for Classroom Teachers – Birds Are Everywhere** **February 2024**

WHY BIRDS?

As the title of this issue notes, birds are everywhere, and for the most part they really are! Birds can be found in cities and rural areas, in nearly every habitat type and ecosystem, and on every continent. Birds are found in forests, in deserts, out at sea, and on remote islands. With more than 10,000 species of birds in the world, everyone knows what birds are, and are familiar with them. People watch birds, feed them, listen to them, keep them as pets, draw them, paint them, photograph them, write about them, sing about them, and eat them. People make things out of birds or their parts, and birds have played a role in the lives of people for thousands of years. Because everyone is familiar with birds, they are a good choice of study, and can help students better understand topics like biology, ecosystems, habitats, and the resources organisms need to survive, and can be a great way to introduce children and families to the outdoors. This issue of *Conservationist for Kids* is an introduction to this broad topic of study, and we hope that you will use it to further supplement your classroom lessons and activities.

BIRDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Many different organizations provide classroom resources about birds. Some offer complete lesson plans, while others offer activities about birds that you can participate in as a class. Some organizations offer teacher workshops about birds, some of which are listed below. Additional resources are included on the second page of this supplement.

The **Cornell Lab of Ornithology** offers a variety of classroom lesson plans and activities, as well as teacher training. More information about their offerings, including lesson plans and downloads, can be found on their website at www.birds.cornell.edu/k12/. They also host a number of citizen science projects about birds, some of which can be adapted to the classroom, including Project FeederWatch, NestWatch, a number of bird counting opportunities, and Celebrate Urban Birds. More information is available at www.birds.cornell.edu/home/citizen-science-be-part-of-something-bigger/.

The **National Audubon Society** has a number of programs and resources available, including Audubon Adventures (www.audubonadventures.org/), two New York City based programs, For the Birds! and LARK Youth Programs (ny.audubon.org/nyc-youth-education), as well as a weeklong teacher training workshop at its popular Hog Island Audubon Camp (hogisland.audubon.org).

There are several organizations and opportunities to study birds that are specifically aimed at youth. The **New York State Ornithological Association** offers the **New York State Young Birders Club**, for birders in New York State ages 10 to 19. The club offers field trips for young birders, a scholarship program to help pay for events and camps, and has a number of resources for youth on their website, www.nysyoungbirders.org. A project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, **eBird**, has a number of resources for young birders on their website at ebird.org/about/resources/for-young-birders. eBird is also a great resource to help students identify and learn about birds in their area.

DEC TEACHER WORKSHOPS AND RESOURCES

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) offers several teacher workshops, many of which contain lesson plans about birds that can be adapted to your classroom. These include



Project Learning Tree, Project WET, Project WILD, Flying WILD, and a variety of other teacher learning opportunities. You can learn more about these resources on DEC's website at dec.ny.gov/get-involved/education/teacher-information/workshops-for-educators. For additional educator resources, visit DEC's website at dec.ny.gov/get-involved/education/teacher-information.

ONLINE RESOURCES*

DEC Birds dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/birds

DEC Biodiversity and Species Conservation dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/biodiversity-species-conservation

DEC Education dec.ny.gov/get-involved/education

DEC New York State Birding www.ibirdny.org

DEC Watchable Wildlife dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/watchable-wildlife

American Bird Conservancy abcbirds.org

American Birding Association www.aba.org

Audubon New York ny.audubon.org

Conservation International www.conservation.org

Cornell Lab of Ornithology www.birds.cornell.edu

Cornell Lab of Ornithology All About Birds www.allaboutbirds.org

Ducks Unlimited www.ducks.org

eBird ebird.org

International Crane Foundation savingcranes.org

Journey North journeynorth.org

National Audubon Society www.audubon.org

National Wildlife Federation www.nwf.org

New York State Bluebird Society nysbs.org

North American Bluebird Society www.nabluebirdsociety.org

Ornithological Council birdnet.org

Partners in Flight partnersinflight.org

Peregrine Fund peregrinefund.org

Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds

The Nature Conservancy www.nature.org

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Birds Program www.fws.gov/program/migratory-birds

Wild Birds Unlimited Kids Activities www.wbu.com/kids-activities/

Wildlife Conservation Society www.wcs.org

World Migratory Bird Day www.birdday.org

BOOKS*

American Birding Association Field Guide to Birds of New York, Scott & Nix, Inc., 2016

Bird Watch Book for Kids, Dylanna Publishing, Inc., 2022

Birds: A Fully Illustrated, Authoritative and Easy-to-Use Guide, St. Martin's Press, 2001

Birds of New York, Naturalist & Traveler Press, 2021

Birds of New York Field Guide, Adventure Publications, 2021

Children's Encyclopedia of Birds, Arcturus, 2020

My Awesome Field Guide to North American Birds, Rockridge Press, 2021

National Audubon Society Birds of North America, Knopf, 2021

National Geographic Kids Bird Guide of North America, National Geographic Kids, 2018

National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, National Geographic, 2017

Peterson Field Guide To Birds Of Eastern & Central North America, Mariner Books, 2020

The Burgess Bird Book for Children, Dover Publications, 2003

The New Stokes Field Guide to Birds: Eastern Region, Little, Brown and Company, 2013

The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America, Knopf, 2016

**Please note, the listing of websites and books is not to be considered an endorsement, as not all have been reviewed by the editor.*

Conservationist for Kids and an accompanying teacher supplement are distributed free of charge to 4th-grade classes throughout New York State three times per school year (fall, winter and spring). If you would like to be added to or removed from the distribution list, need to update information, or if you have questions or comments, please e-mail the editor at KidsConservationist@dec.ny.gov or call 518-402-8047. Limited quantities of some back issues are also available upon request. The full archives can be found online at dec.ny.gov/news/conservationist-magazine/conservationist-for-kids/issues-index.