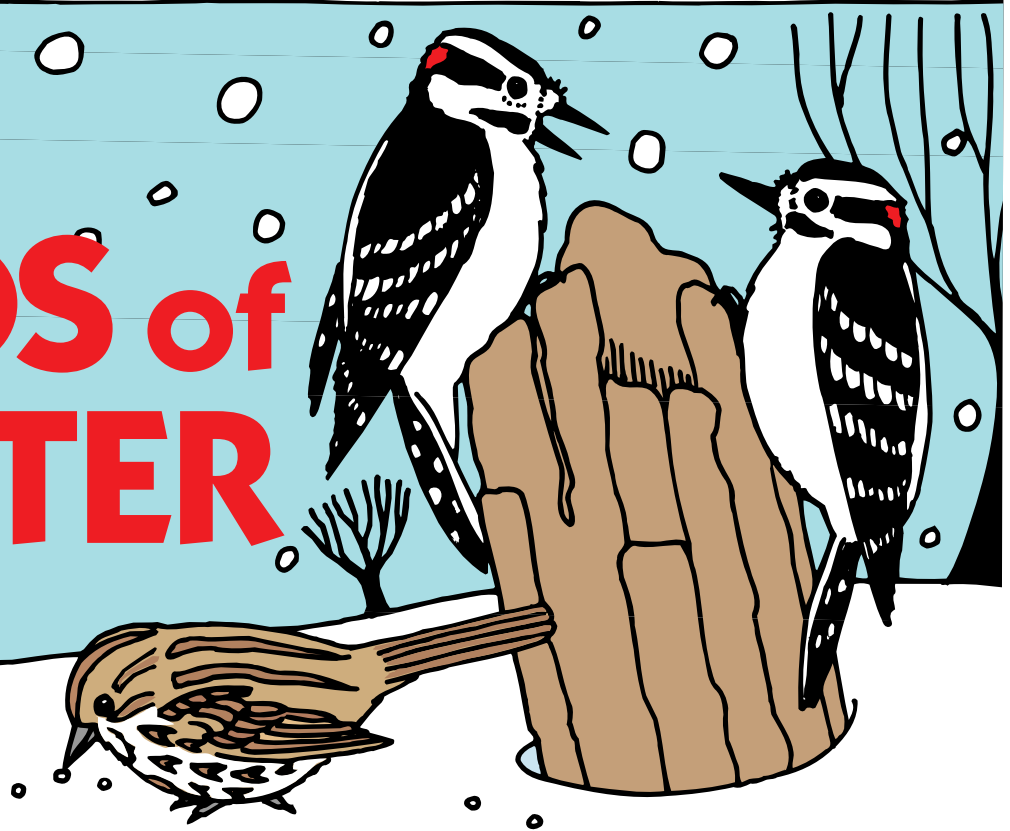


The BIRDS of WINTER



Winter is a special time to watch the many birds that live right in your backyard. Give kids information about birds wintering in your area and ask them to be on the lookout for these feathered friends.

Birds in Your Backyard

Bird-watching is becoming one of America's favorite pastimes. Millions of Americans enjoy watching birds. The most popular form of wildlife observation, bird-watching is easy, entertaining, and educational. All one has to do is look out the window and view the many fascinating, colorful, diverse, active little creatures flitting about in the trees or on the ground. Introduce your class to the many common American bird species so they may become interested in backyard bird-watching. Spark an interest in birds!

Birds in Winter

Winter is a great time to observe birds...trees are bare and leaves can't block your view. With food often scarce during winter months, hungry birds flock to backyard feeders, coming into close range. Although many birds fly south for the winter, no part of the country is without some winter birds. A growing number of birds have changed their winter patterns and have chosen not to migrate. Some scientists attribute this to the milder winters of the past century; others feel that it is caused by the loss of natural habitat, while still others think it is the prevalence of backyard feeders. Although birds thrive in wooded areas, many have adapted over the years to suburban and urban settings. It's a matter of making the most of existing situations. Even in cities there are pockets of open space that will support bird life, and the birds found in your backyard are attracted by what your yard

offers. All birds have three basic needs—food, cover, and water. There are things that you can do to attract birds. Even if your backyard does not have a wealth of food, a water supply, mature trees, or thick shrubbery, you can create these features by providing food, feeders, birdbaths, and nestboxes.

Bird Bulletin Board

Pique your students' interest in bird-watching and sharpen their observation skills at the same time by creating a bulletin board that features some of the winter birds found in your area. Cover a bulletin board with light blue paper and attach evergreen and leafless deciduous branches. Next spatter the board with white paint to create a snowy effect. Duplicate the bird patterns for children to color and cut out. Attach them to the bulletin board as if the birds were perched in the trees. Then add the title "Winter Bird Watch" or "Backyard Birds of Winter."

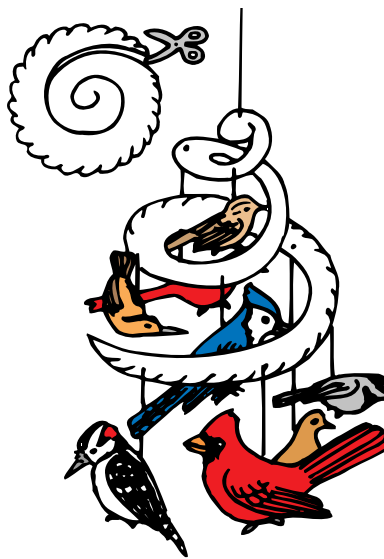


Winter Mobile

Give students an opportunity to become familiar with various backyard birds found in the United States through the many bird books available and then making a bird mobile. Each child will need a paper plate, pencil, scissors, markers or crayons, tape, a paper punch, and nine pieces of string about 12 inches long. Reproduce the eight bird patterns for each child. Together, read the name of each bird and the coloring instructions. Then guide students through the following steps:

1. Use a pencil to draw a spiral on the paper plate. Cut along the line.
2. Punch eight holes along the spiral, spacing them evenly. Punch one hole in the center for attaching a string hanger.
3. Color the birds as directed in the coloring instructions.
4. Tape one end of a piece of string to the back of each bird and tie the other end to a hole

along the spiral. Attach the last piece of string to the center hole and hang the mobile.



Bird Play

Have some fun with stick puppets and verses that tell about winter birds. Reproduce each bird pattern on sturdy paper and ask students to color and cut out the bird. You can cut off or fold back the coloring

instructions. Tape a craft stick to the back of the bird and have children learn the verses below for each bird. Act out or sing the actions for each.

I am a bright red cardinal,
A cheery song I sing.
Even though it's winter,
You can hear it ring....
(Cheer, whit whit, pretty pretty.)

I am a quiet mourning dove.
I feed upon the ground.
You will hear my morning call,
A sad, unhappy sound....
(Coooo-ah, cooo cooo, coo.)

I am a downy woodpecker.
I hang on the side of a tree,
Sounding like a hammer...
Tap, tap, tap, that's me!
(Tap, tap, tap, trrrrrrrrrr.)

I am a white-breasted nuthatch,
You won't find me on the ground.
Call me a topsy-turvy bird.
I spend my days upside down...
(Hang upside down and pretend to walk down a tree.)

I am a noisy blue jay,
You couldn't call me kind.
I chase birds from the feeder
And take the eggs I find.
(Act out some bully behavior.)

I am a black-capped chickadee,
I hop all around.
I like to swing from twig to twig,
And hang upside down.
(Act out some acrobatics.)

I am a robin red breast,
I'm the best known bird of all.
Males do all the singing,
With this cheery call....
(Cheer up, cheer, cheer, cheer-up!)

I am a little sparrow,
I sing so many songs.
Happily flitting through the trees,
I sing all the year long....
(Maids! Maids! Maids! Hang-up-you-teakettle-ettle-ettle!)

Staying Warm

Birds are warm-blooded animals with normal body temperatures ranging from 101° to 112°. When outside temperatures fall below zero, birds survive and save their energy by perching quietly and fluffing out their down feathers for extra insulation. Birds can do this only as long as they have enough body fat to act as fuel. Give your students an idea of how birds keep warm in winter by having them think of a bird's inner feathers as thermal underwear. Soft down traps and holds the warm air next to their skin while tight, waterproof contour feathers act as a windbreak. You often see some birds pull one leg up to its breast feathers as it balances on one foot while other birds may squat low to the ground. On winter nights, birds sometimes roost together to share body warmth. Simulate the ways in which birds retain their body warmth by inviting children to put on their jackets and head out to the playground. Make sure kids zip up their jackets and tie their

hoods. Ask them to balance on one leg, holding the other leg close to their bodies or have them squat down and hug their knees. Try huddling together to share the warmth. What do they observe about keeping warm?

Backyard Bird Guide

Make some Backyard Bird Guides with your students to help them organize their bird-watching efforts. Duplicate the bird patterns, the bird fact cards, a bird guide cover page, and eight work pages for each child. Complete these steps to create a booklet that identifies and describes eight common backyard birds:

1. Color and cut out cover and eight work pages. Assemble into a booklet and staple.
2. Color bird patterns according to directions and cut out.
3. Cut out and match each fact card with the correct bird.
4. Glue a fact card on each of the eight pages, glue the bird pattern beside the fact page, and write the name of the bird next to the pattern.

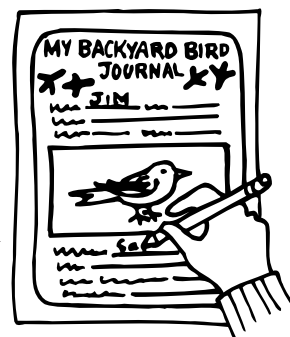


Remind kids to refer to their bird guide often so that they can identify the common birds as they watch birds wintering in their backyards.

Birder Journal

Children can learn so much about birds through careful, quiet observation. Winter bird feeders are an easy way to attract birds to a backyard, and they give kids an opportunity to watch as hungry birds come to eat. From a cozy seat at the win-

dow, children can watch a bird and its activities without distracting it. Finding enough food and suitable shelter during the winter is a full-time job for a bird. Busy most of the daylight hours, it retires to roost only when darkness falls. Encourage students to keep a birder journal and use the reproducible journal pages to record their observations. Take a few minutes each day for observation and set aside some time for children to share what they've seen and learned.



Finding Food

Feeding birds during the winter ranges from throwing out a few bread crumbs to providing birds with commercial bird seed in feeders. Statistics tell us that about 30 million tons of bird feed are put out every year in North America alone. Extra rations are needed to keep birds warm in the colder weather. Small birds may have to spend most, if not all, of the daylight hours finding food. Some people believe that you should only feed birds in the winter if you have the time and resources to continue it all winter long. Birds do not rely on food from feeders as their only source of food, but feeder food does make survival easier for birds particularly during harsh winters when the ground is covered with snow or ice. The end of winter is probably the most important time to provide bird seed since at this point natural food sources are at their lowest. Each bird species has its own preference for food, usually choosing the food that is the easiest to obtain. The bird fact cards list food preferences for birds wintering in our backyards.

Bird Feeders

Kids will enjoy making these simple feeders to help their feathered friends during the cold winter months when food is scarce.

• Carton Feeder

Help kids make a milk carton seed feeder to hang in their backyard. Cut out a triangular section about 1/2" from the bottom of each corner of the carton. Carefully poke a pencil through one side of the bottom tray of the carton to create a perch for the bird. Punch a hole in the top of the carton and attach a long piece of twine to create a hanger. Children will enjoy taking their feeders home and hanging them from a tree branch in their backyard. Remind kids to fill the bottom of the feeder with seed on a regular basis.



• Pine Cone Feeder

Create a bird seed treat using a pine cone, peanut butter, bird seed, popsicle stick, pie tin, twine, and a wax paper sandwich bag. Begin by tying a loop of twine securely around the base of a pine cone. Spread peanut butter over the cone using the popsicle stick. Place bird seed in a pie tin and roll the cone in the bird seed mixture. Slip the pine cone inside a sandwich bag to take home. Children can hang the cone feeder on a tree limb near a window so that they can see their friends enjoy a special treat.

For The Birds

Commercial bird seeds can be purchased at most grocery, hardware, or discount department stores. These seeds usually contain a lot of "filler" that many birds do not like. If you are anxious to serve birds their favorite foods, try a variety of seeds and grains and notice what is left when the birds are finished eating...different birds have different tastes. Many birds love sunflower seeds, cracked corn, and white millet. Black oil seeds, which are easier for smaller birds to eat, also contain more oil which translates into more fat and energy for the bird. Try this bird seed mix of 4 parts cracked corn, 1 part millet, and 1 part sunflower seeds to make an extra special snack.

Bird Drink

Birds need drinking water all year long and birds that eat only seeds have the greatest need for water. If your kids are observant, they might be able to see a bird taking a "drink" from the snow. While some bird watchers use special heaters for their bird baths, students can place a lid of clean water out on their decks or steps for birds to quench their thirst.

Bird Books

Backyard Birds of Winter

by Carol Lerner (*Morrow*)

An excellent book to share with kids...a simple, concise, and beautifully illustrated introductory guide. Check out Lerner's sequel, *Backyard Birds of Summer*.

Backyard Birds

by Jonathan Pine (*HarperCollins*)

An interesting beginning guide to six common backyard birds.

Birds in Your Backyard

by Barbara Herkert

(*Dawn Publications*)

This introduction to the joys of bird-watching will be a helpful resource.

Backyard Bird Watching

by George H. Harrison

(*Willow Creek Press*)

A great resource guide filled with projects and information about how to attract, feed, and provide homes for birds.

If you're looking for a way to teach kids about birds in an interactive way, check out the following CD-Rom:

National Audubon Society Interactive CD-ROM Guide to North American Birds

(*Alfred A. Knopf*)

Bird Resources

Backyard research on birds has been collected through Project FeederWatch since 1987. Thousands of school-age children who feed birds record the number and species of birds that frequent these feeders. This data has helped to assess the size and health of wild bird populations. For information, write:

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

159 Sapsucker Woods Road

Ithaca, NY 14850

(1-800-843-2473)

<http://birds.cornell.edu/pfw/>

Sign up for the FeederWatch Newsletter, check out the Photo Gallery, get FeederWatch Tips, and find the Young Feeder-Watcher link featuring children who participate in the program at home or in school.

The **SCHOOLYARD HABITAT PROGRAM**, sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation, helps school communities create a habitat-based learning site. For information, write:

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

11100 Wildlife Center Drive

Reston, VA 20190-5362

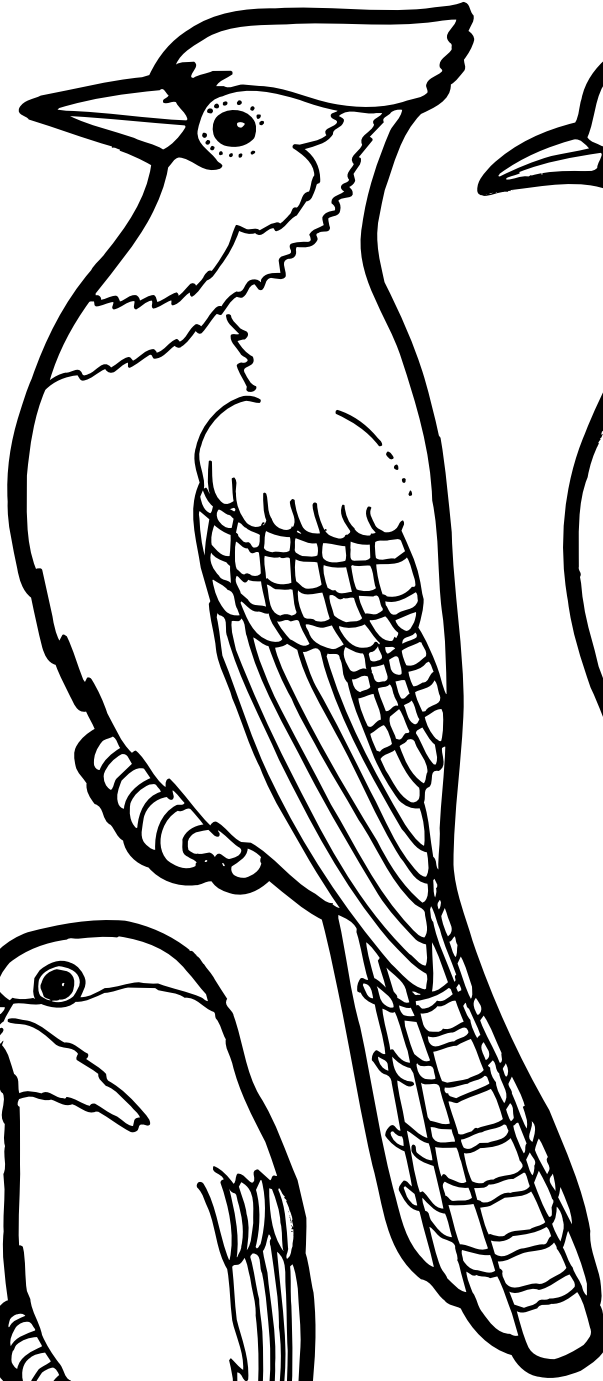
1-800-822-9919

Or visit the Schoolyard Habitat page on the World Wide Web:
www.nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats/

BIRDS FOR BIRD GUIDE, MOBILE, & PUPPETS

Blue Jay

Color the back bright blue.
Color the face and belly white.
Color the tail and wings blue with black stripes and white tips.



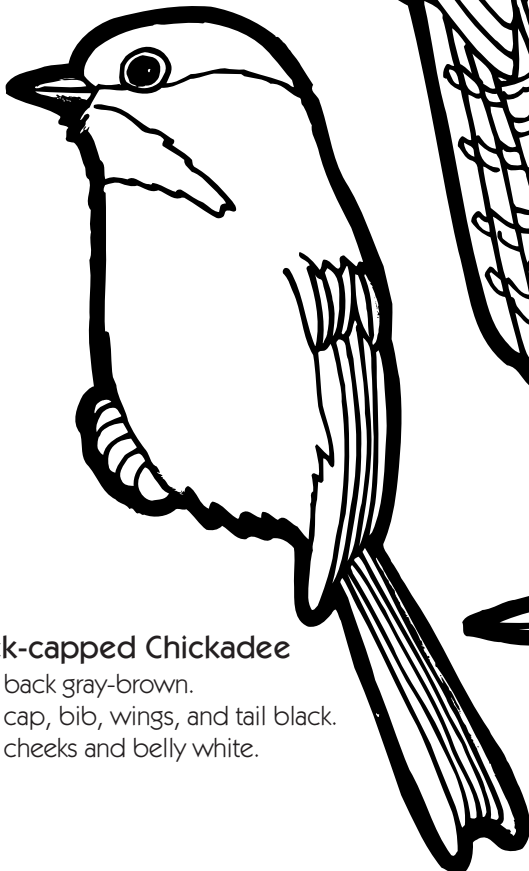
Mourning Dove

Color the back brown-black.
Color white edges on the wings.
Color the head and belly tan.



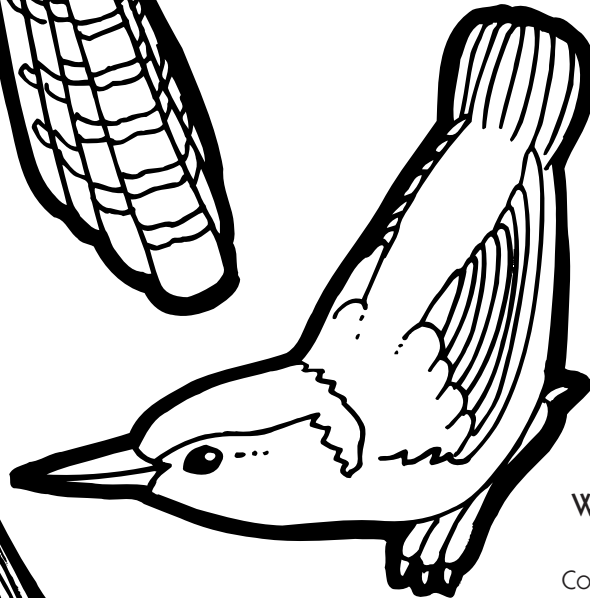
Black-capped Chickadee

Color the back gray-brown.
Color the cap, bib, wings, and tail black.
Color the cheeks and belly white.



White-breasted Nuthatch

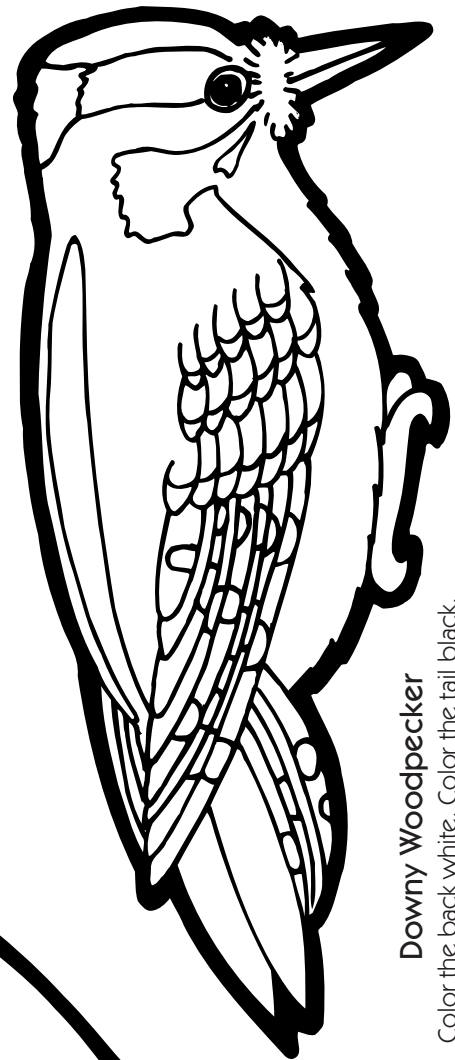
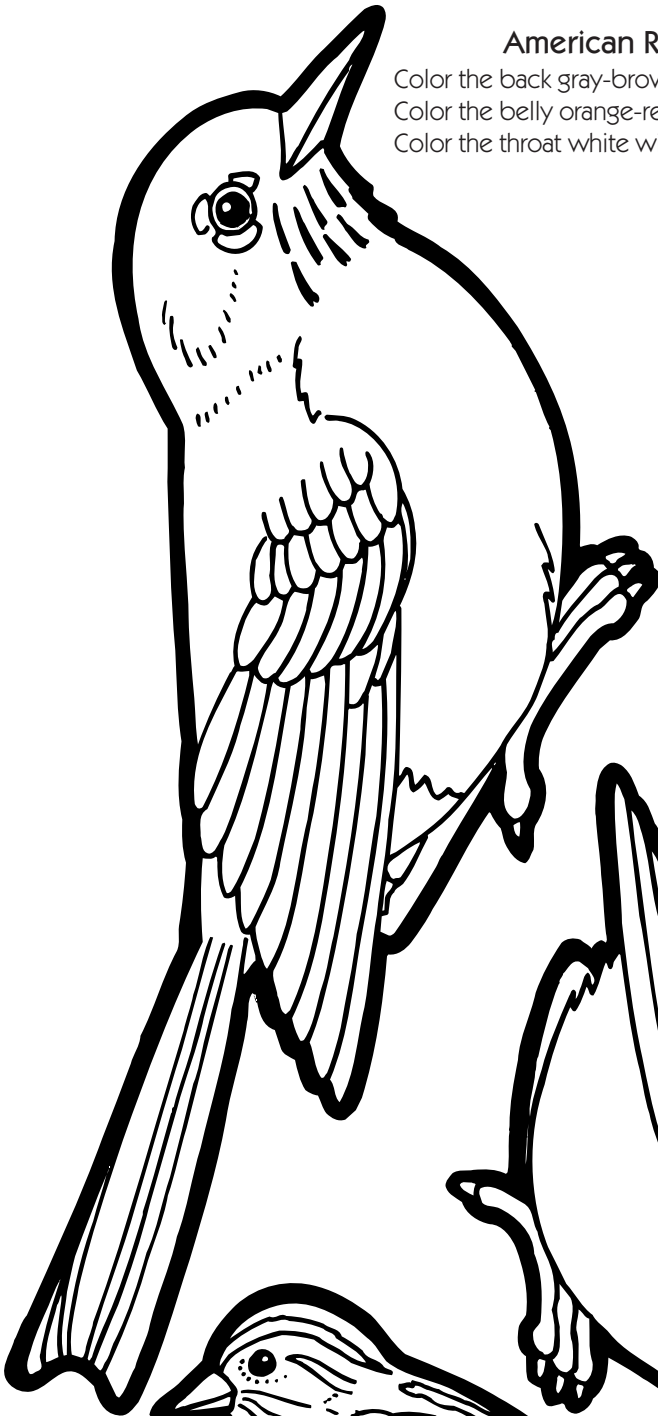
Color the back gray.
Color the belly white.
Color the cap black.



BIRDS FOR BIRD GUIDE, MOBILE, & PUPPETS

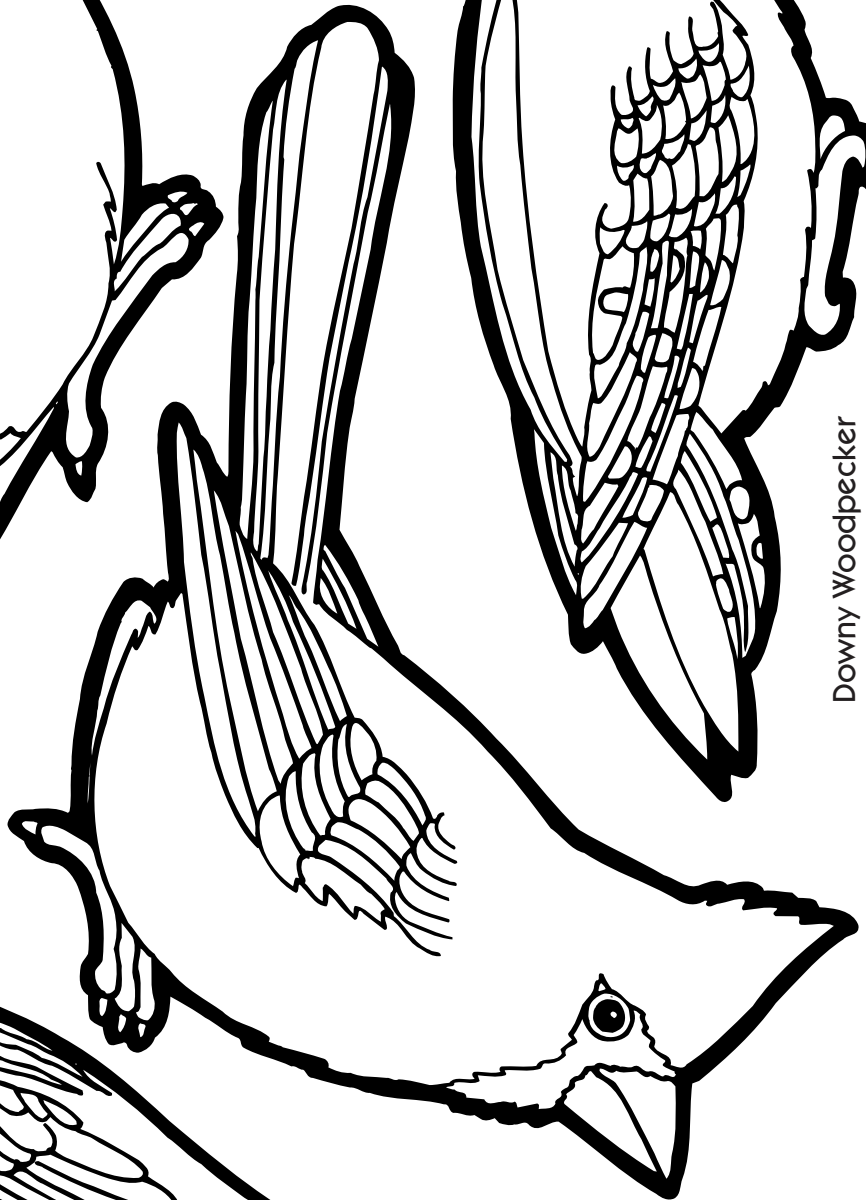
American Robin

Color the back gray-brown
Color the belly orange-red.
Color the throat white with black stripes.



Downy Woodpecker

Color the back white. Color the tail black.
Color the wings black and white.
Color the back of the head red.



Northern Cardinal

Color the body bright red.
Color the face black.
Color the beak orange.

Song Sparrow

Color the body brown with darker streaks.
Color the belly white with brown streaks.



Northern Cardinal



Length: 8-3/4 inches
Eats: fruits, seeds, insects
Feeder Food: cracked corn, nuts, sunflower seeds
Winter Roost: thickets and thick shrubs
Winters: pairs up and joins small flock

Mourning Dove



Length : 12 inches
Eats: weed and grass seeds
Feeder Food: seeds, crumbs, cracked corn
Winter Roost: evergreens
Winters: joins small flock

Song Sparrow



Length: 5-1/2 to 7 inches
Eats: insects and seeds
Feeder Food: sunflower seeds, other seeds, bread crumbs, cracked corn, millet
Winter Roost: evergreen trees
Winters: small flocks

American Robin



Length: 10 inches
Eats: fruit, insects, earthworms
Feeder Food: apples, sunflower seeds, raisins, crumbs
Winter Roost: evergreen trees and shrubs
Winters: small groups in larger flock

Downy Woodpecker



Length: 6-3/4 inches
Eats: insects, fruit & tree seeds
Feeder Food: sunflower seeds, corn, cornbread, suet, peanut butter
Winter Roost: tree cavity
Winters: pairs feed together but roost alone

Black-capped Chickadee



Length: 5-1/4 inches
Eats: small insects, winter berries, tree seeds
Feeder Food: sunflower seeds, peanuts, donuts, suet
Winter Roost: hole in tree
Winters: small flocks

White-breasted Nuthatch



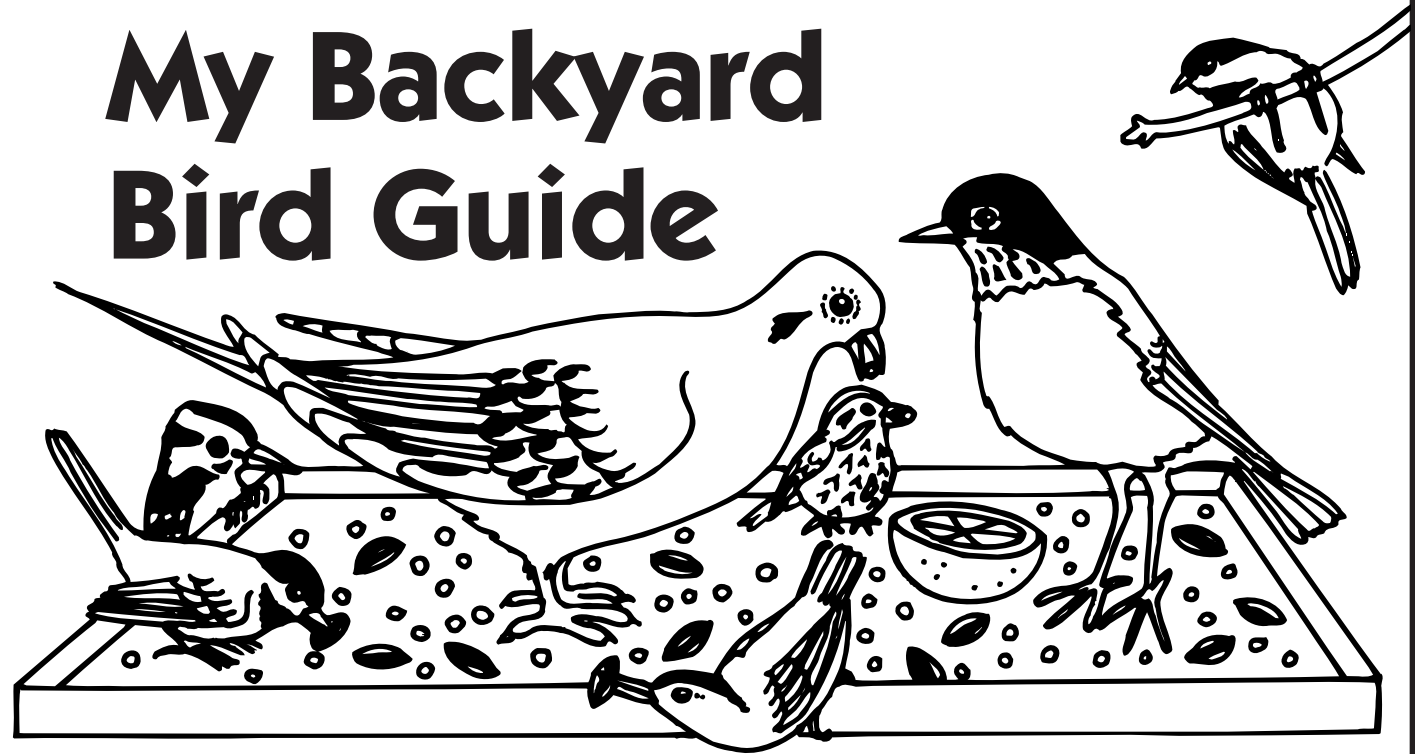
Length: 5-3/4 inches
Eats: insects, spiders, tree seeds
Feeder Food: peanuts, sunflower seeds, suet
Winter Roosts: tree cavity
Winters: joins a flock

Blue Jay



Length: 11 inches
Eats: likes vegetable food but will eat most anything
Feeder Food: peanuts, sunflower seeds, corn, suet, bread
Winter Roost: thick shrubs or evergreen trees
Winters: in pairs or small flocks

My Backyard Bird Guide



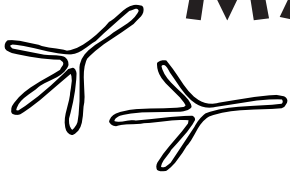
Name _____



Glue fact card here.

Facts I learned about this bird:

MY BACKYARD BIRD JOURNAL



Name: _____ Date: _____

Name the bird: _____

Time of day seen: _____ Where seen: _____

Draw a picture of the bird.

What was the bird doing? _____

Was the bird alone? _____

Look again tomorrow. Did you see the same bird? _____

What is the bird doing today? _____