

Birding 101

Discover your local birds!

Summary:

Birds are all around us! Learn how to find and identify birds in your neighborhood. From your backyard, sidewalk, window, or computer, get to know your feathered neighbors.

Guiding Questions:

What do you see? What can you hear?

What features do you notice?

Is there evidence that birds are nearby?

Experience Goals:

- Explore which birds might live around you.
- Use Field Guides to compare and identify birds.
- Get outside and have fun!

Supplies:

- [Field Guide to Common Birds of Chicago](#)
- Bird Call Audio at AllAboutBirds.org
- Bird ID Example (page 5)
- Notebook and pencil
- Optional: Binoculars
- Optional: Camera with Zoom

Steps:

1. Explore Field Guides & Bird Calls
 - a. A **Field Guide** is a visual tool used for identification.
 - b. Get familiar with the animals that live around Chicago by looking through the Field Guides and listening to the bird call audio (bird call audio instructions on page 4).
 - c. Look at the Bird ID Example on page 5 to determine what features to look for.
 - d. *What features do you notice? What does each bird sound like?*
2. Go Outside! (or to a window)
 - a. Go to your backyard, sidewalk, local nature space, or look out of a window. Morning is the best time to look for birds, because that is when most of them are active.
 - b. Look and listen! While quietly standing still, use your eyes and ears to notice what is around you. *What can you see? What do you hear?*
 - c. Optional: use binoculars to get a close look at the birds, or use a camera to zoom in and record your sighting!
 - d. It's okay if you don't find anything! That doesn't mean they aren't there. Keep looking for evidence. *Do you see nests in the trees? Are there nuts, seeds, or insects to eat? Is there water nearby?*
3. Identify Your Bird!
 - a. Look at the features of the bird. *What color is it? What shape are the wings? The beak? The feet?*
 - b. Draw a picture! Many scientists draw pictures to help them remember what it looked like or what it was doing.
 - c. Optional: You can take a photo to help identify the bird, but a picture can't capture everything! Be sure to note size and any calls the bird made.

- d. Use the Field Guides to look for birds with similar features to the one you saw. *What features help you decide that they are the same bird?*

Variations:

- Can't get outside?
 - Look at or print the attached images on page 6 and 7. Fold over or cover up each name, and then try to identify each bird image by using the [Field Guide to Common Birds of Chicago](#)
 - *What do you notice about the animal? What features help you decide that they are the same bird?*
 - Watch WebCams on the internet. A variety of birds can be watched on live feeds. Check out the Peregrine falcons in Chicago on these [linked WebCams](#).
- Listen to the bird calls. *What does the call sound like to you? Can you replicate them?*
- Have a smartphone? Download the Merlin Bird App for identifying local birds: <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>

Extensions:

- Did you find something? Share your findings with scientists! You can share your observation on eBird: <https://ebird.org/home> or iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/>
Explore what other people have observed in their backyards!
- Want to make your backyard a good home for birds? Make a bird feeder or bird bath! Try an internet search for 'DIY bird feeder' for ideas and inspirations.
- Discover more Field Museum Field Guides at <https://fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org/>

Birds Calls:

Explore Bird Calls at AllAboutBirds.org

Search any bird on the site (examples: robin, peregrine falcon, crow)

- On each bird's site, click the green 'Listen' button
- For more calls, click on the 'Sounds' Icon

Looking for tips on how to learn bird songs and calls?

Visit [Bird Song ID](#)

Bird ID Example: Peregrine Falcon



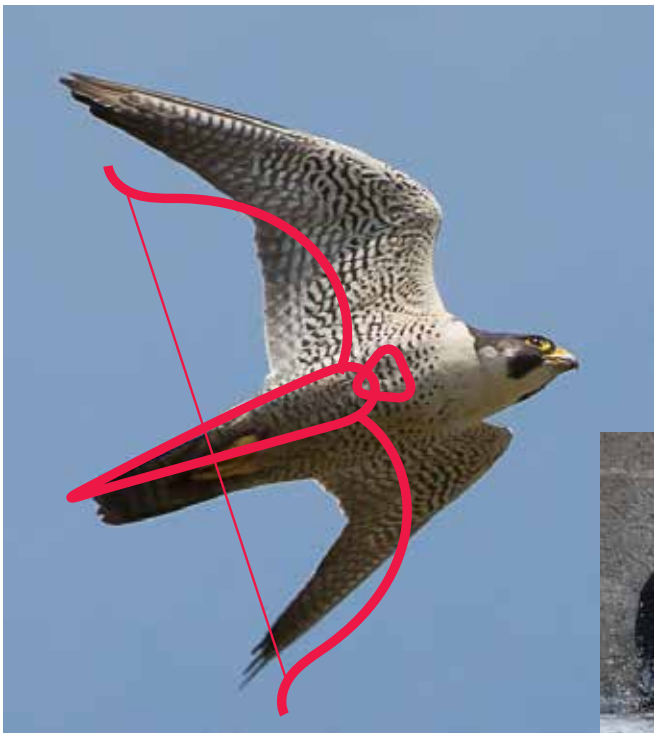
Stephanie Ware

Gray cheek patches



Stephanie Ware

Yellow legs and feet



Stephanie Ware

Long, pointed wings; short tail; "crossbow shape"



Mary Hennen

Bluish-gray back

Animals to identify



Great Blue Heron



Downy Woodpecker



Caspian Tern



**Black-capped
Chickadee**

All photos pages 6&7 by John Bates, Field Museum



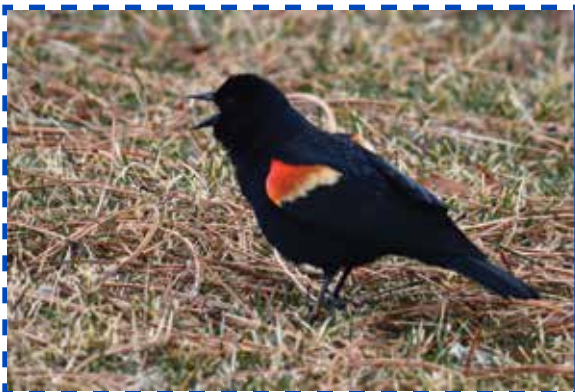
Red-tailed Hawk



House Finch



Peregrine Falcon



**Red-winged
Blackbird**