

A Visual Guide to Indiana Birds



Common species and birdwatching tips

by Elizabeth Howe

Common Indiana Bird Species



Eastern Bluebird

Known for their bright blue plumage and cheerful song, these birds forage by perching low and fluttering to the ground to eat berries and catch insects. You'll find them in open country with scattered trees that have suitable nest holes. Their population has increased thanks to nest boxes. They eat mealworms, peanut pieces, sunflower hearts, grapes, and raisins. Months: year-round.

White-Breasted Nuthatch

The largest North American nuthatch, it is easily identifiable by its nasal 'yank' call. It has a long beak, and the blue cap on its head makes it look like it's wearing a hood. Primarily insectivorous, they will visit bird feeders for sunflower hearts, nuts, peanut butter, and suet. Months: year-round.



Common Indiana Bird Species



Tufted Titmouse

A little gray bird with an echoing 'Peter-Peter-peter' song, the Tufted Titmouse flits through tree canopies in deciduous woods, parks, and backyards. They have large black eyes, small round bills, and a brushy crest. They forage by hopping among branches, often hanging upside down, sometimes hovering. Related to chickadees, they readily come to feeders for seeds, peanuts, and suet. Months: year-round.

Carolina Chickadee

Little flocks of chickadees enliven the woods with their active behavior and their cheery sounding 'chick-a-dee' song. Male and female chickadee pairs bond for years. They are curious and intelligent birds, with a black cap, black bib, gray wings and back, and whitish underside. They'll visit feeders for seeds and suet. Months: year-round.



Common Indiana Bird Species



Downy Woodpecker
The smallest woodpecker in North America, the downy woodpecker is widespread. You'll spot them in towns, parks... and your backyard! Males have a striped face, a short, stout bill, and a red spot on their nape. They may forage on weed stalks as well as trees, eating a variety of insects. You can attract them with suet or a platform feeder filled with sunflower seeds. Months: year-round.

White-Throated Sparrow

These sparrows have a striking white throat, dark bill, and yellow spot before the eye. Adults have white or tan head stripes. These winter birds shuffle around the ground in loose flocks, often coming to bird feeders that are placed close enough to thickets. They feed heavily on insects and visit feeders with sunflower seeds, millet, and corn. Months: Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb, Mar, April.



Common Indiana Bird Species



American Goldfinch

A typical summer sight is a male American goldfinch, flying over a meadow, flashing golden in the sun, calling 'perchickory' as it bounds up and down in flight. They wait to nest in June and July, when milkweed and thistle produce their fibrous seeds, which the birds use to feed their young and build their nests. Months: year-round.

Ruby-Throated Hummingbird

Hundreds of kinds of hummingbirds nest in the American tropics, and more than a dozen in the western U.S., but east of the Great Plains there is only the Ruby-Throat. Hovering in front of a flower to sip nectar, it beats its wings more than 50 times a second. Months: May, Jun, July, Aug, Sep, Oct.



Common Indiana Bird Species



House Finch

The colorful House Finch frequents suburban settings across North America, along with meadows, open woods and brushy field edges. Males vary in shades and intensity of reds; some are yellow or orange. Adaptable and cheery-voiced, they sing loudly in neighborhoods and visit feeders for sunflower seeds. Small in size, they also visit hummingbird feeders for sugar water. Months: year-round.

Pine Siskin

From the Audubon Society: "Although it's patterned like a sparrow, its shape, actions, and call notes all reveal that this bird is really a goldfinch in disguise." Like the goldfinch, pine siskins flock to meadows and mixed woods, seek out dried thistle, and come to feeders — often alongside goldfinches in winter — for nyjer and other seeds. Months: Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr.



Common Indiana Bird Species



House Wren

A plain brown bird with an effervescent voice, the House Wren is a common backyard bird over nearly the entire Western Hemisphere. Listen for its rush-and-jumble song in summer and you'll find it zipping through shrubs and low tree branches, snatching at insects. They like to eat mealworms, peanut pieces, and sunflower chips from platform or suet feeders. Months: spring, summer.

Red-Winged Blackbird

Among our most familiar birds, Red Wings sing their nasal 'o-ka-lee' song in every marsh and wet field from coast to coast. Glossy black males have red and yellow shoulder patches they can puff up when they sing to attract a mate. Mottled black-brown females build the nests. They feed on sunflower, corn, millet and suet. Months: Jan, Feb, Mar.



Common Indiana Bird Species



Baltimore Oriole

In dazzling yellow-orange and black plumage, these songbirds are very common in open woods and groves in summer. Their bag-shaped hanging nests, woven of grass, bark and plant fibers, are commonly hung from shade trees. Orioles forage insects and seek nectar from flowers and sugar-water feeders. They also eat fruit, like oranges, from platform feeders. Months: May, Jun, Jul, Aug.

Pileated Woodpecker

Look for them in stands of mature forest with plenty of dead trees and downed logs — deep excavations into rotten wood are telltale signs of this species. Also listen for this bird's loud drumming and shrill, whinnying calls. They forage insects and berries and will visit feeders for suet, meal worms, and black oil sunflower seed. Months: all year.



Common Indiana Bird Species



Dark-Eyed Junco

Juncos can be found along woodland edges or suburban yards, feeding on the ground, and making ticking sounds as they fly up into the bushes. Female juncos choose the nest site, typically a depression in the ground or amidst bushes or tree roots. Juncos will visit feeders or pick up ground feed such as millet, cracked corn, and black-oil sunflower. Months: Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb, Mar.

Northern Cardinal

Look for the birds in shrubby areas such as forest edges, overgrown fields, or marshy thickets. They nest in dense foliage and look for high perches for singing. Only a few female North American songbirds sing, but the female Northern Cardinal does, often while sitting on her nest, giving the male information about when to bring food back. They prefer fruit and black oil sunflower seed. Months: year-round.





Birdwatching is not just observing. It's about connecting with nature and appreciating the beauty of wildlife that surrounds us in our everyday lives.

5 Tips for Backyard Birdwatching

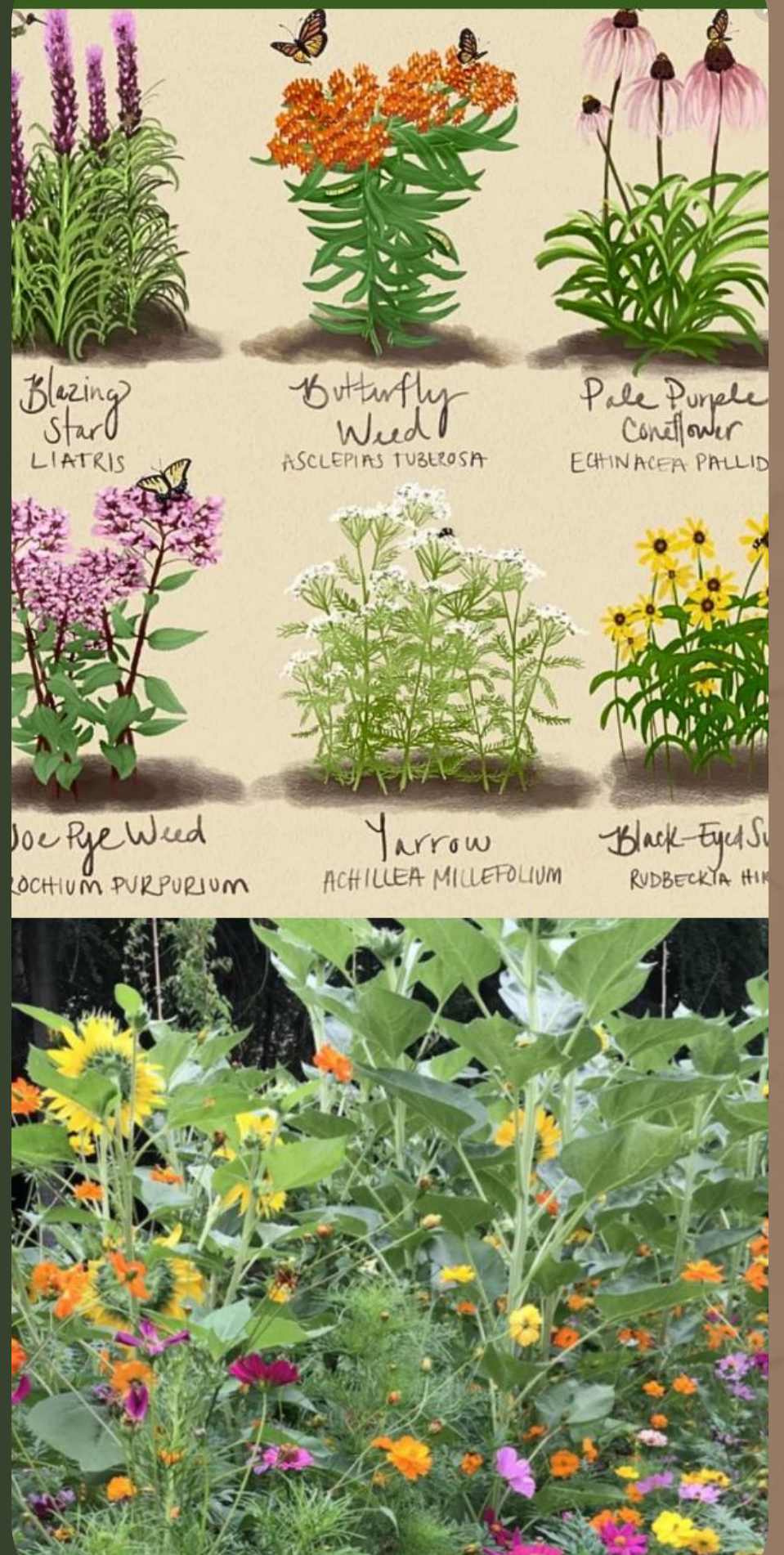
1. Create a Wildlife Habitat

Creating a diverse backyard landscape planted with native trees, shrubs, bushes and wildflowers provides not only an outdoor oasis for your family, but a healthy habitat for birds and pollinators, such as bees and butterflies. Such vegetation creates natural cover for birds as they seek hiding spots and nesting opportunities, and offers natural food sources. Adding a bird bath or small pond will satisfy birds' water needs for drinking and bathing. Ensure ongoing access to clean, fresh water to avoid the spread of disease, and minimize the use of chemical pesticides as they can harm birds and their food sources.

5 Tips for Backyard Birdwatching

2. Plant a Buffet

Find easy-to-grow plants native to your area (White's Garden Center is a good place to start!) that are also great for birds, butterflies, and bees. They provide nourishing seeds and fruits and offer places to nest and shelter. Consider flowers such as blazing star, purple coneflower, milkweed, joe yew weed, yarrow, and black-eyed Susan. They provide nectar and seeds for birds and pollinators yet some have stiff stalks or strong aromas that are repellant to deer. Consider vines such as trumpet honeysuckle, shrubs like button bush and elderberry, and oak and dogwood trees. By incorporating native plants into your landscape, you're creating a sanctuary that benefits wildlife.



5 Tips for Backyard Birdwatching

3. Choose Food & Feeders for the Birds You Want

- **Songbirds** (chickadees, finches, nuthatches, titmouse, cardinals)
 - **Food:** black-oil sunflower seed, nyjer/thistle, and safflower seed (attracts cardinals, disliked by squirrels)
 - **Feeders:** Tube feeders (great for small perching birds), suet cage, hopper or platform feeders
- **Woodpeckers**
 - **Food:** suet cakes, mealworms, black-oil sunflower seed, peanuts
 - **Feeders:** suet cage, peanut feeders with metal mesh
- **Hummingbirds**
 - **Food:** nectar (1 part sugar to 4 parts water, no red dye)
 - **Nectar feeder**
- **Misc.** (sparrows, juncos, doves)
 - **Food:** millet, cracked corn, mixed seeds
 - **Feeder:** ground trays or scattered food on low platforms

Shelter feeders from the elements and keep them full with fresh food. Clean regularly with hot, soapy water. Rake up spilled seed and droppings.



5 Tips for Backyard Birdwatching

4. Provide Shelter and Safe Nesting Sites

Birds feel vulnerable on the ground — and rightly so. Predators abound. It's smart to have nearby trees they can fly to after grabbing a seed. Tall evergreens offer safe, hidden nesting sites well above the ground. Install birdhouses or nesting boxes in strategic locations to provide safe and secure nesting sites. Provide perches, like branches or poles, for birds to rest and observe their surroundings.

Bird baths should be elevated on a pedestal or suspended from chains with clear visibility. Birds prefer shallow water that's no more than an inch deep. Heated baths are especially welcome where water freezes in winter.



5 Tips for Backyard Birdwatching

5. Observe and Enjoy

Learning about birds — their shapes, sizes, markings, habitat, behaviors, and songs — will help you greatly in your early stages of bird identification. Pick up a pair of binoculars and a field guide. Or check out an online app such as the free **Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab**. Once spotted, you simply input the bird's location, date, size, and coloring, and you'll receive photos of potential species matches. Once identified, you'll learn about species' and gender variations, habitat, migration patterns, and local seasonality. You'll even get to listen to the bird's signature songs!

For information about local resources and events, contact the **Indiana Audubon Society** and check out the **Indiana Birding Trail**.



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