

More Useful Tips & Tricks

Brush up on these parts of a bird and you will be describing and identifying in no time!



- ◆ Bring a set of binoculars and a field guide if you have one
- ◆ Dress for the weather and stay hydrated
- ◆ Bring a small notebook or field journal to record your observations
- ◆ Place a feeder in your yard to attract some backyard birds for practice
- ◆ Take advantage of the **Merlin Bird ID** app or the **iNaturalist** app - they're free!
- ◆ When you're confident, you can log your observations on the **eBird** app or at **eBird.org**
- ◆ Join a community birding group or another community science project

Want to learn more? Contact us!



Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
 14500 Lark Bunting Lane
 Brighton, CO 80603
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References: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, allaboutbirds.org

Birding Tips for Beginners



Useful tips & tricks to help your birding career "take flight"!



BIRD FIELD MARKS

FIELD MARK EXAMPLES

Field marks are distinctive stripes, spots, patches, patterns, and colors. Birds use many of these markings to recognize members of their own species, and we as birders can do the same!

Head Field Marks

Eyebrow stripe - line over the eye

Eyeline - line through the eye

Throat patch—directly underneath the beak

Whisker mark - also called a mustache

Color of upper and lower beak

Color of the lore - area between base of beak and eye

Crown stripe - stripe in the midline of the head

Eyering—ring of color around eye

Presence or absence of crest-on top of head

Color of the eye, or iris

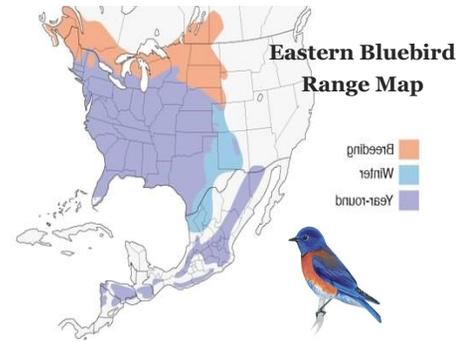
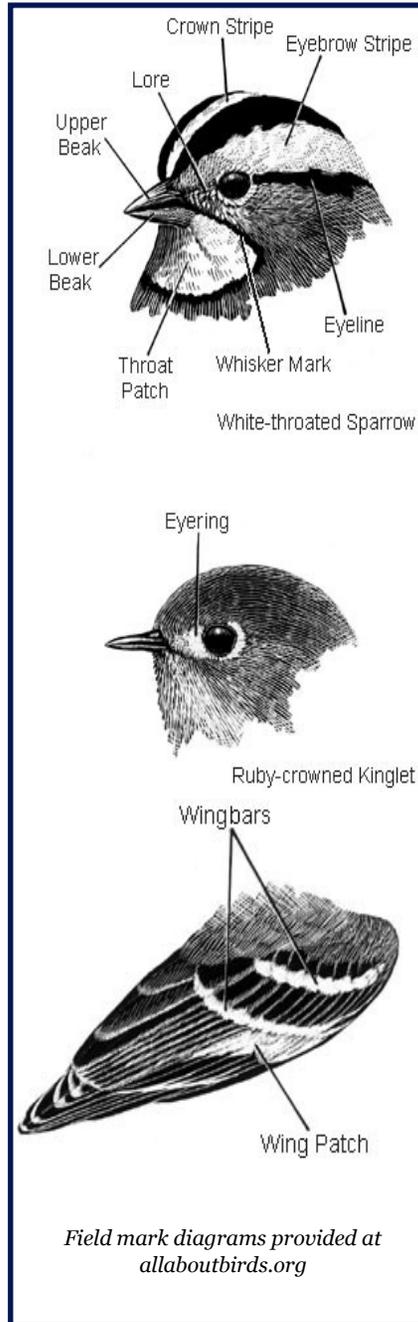
Wing Field Marks

Wingbars - stripes across the folded wing

Wing patches—blocks of color on the wing

Wing lining- feathers covering the underside of the wing

Wing tips—shape and color



WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

Behavior

Watching what birds are doing can be just as helpful as describing how they look. **Does the bird hop, like a sparrow, or scurry along trees, like a nuthatch? Does it forage on the ground, like a robin, or does it swoop through the air to catch insects, like a swallow?**

Learning to identify flight patterns is another great way to distinguish between two similar-looking birds from a distance.

Habitat

Check range maps in a field guide, online, or on the **Merlin** or **eBird app** to discover whether a bird is likely to live in the area and at what time of year. These resources will also tell you what type of habitat they will most likely be spotted in.

Is your bird found in Colorado? Is it seen here during this time of year?

What type of habitat is it using?

Forested, prairie, urban? Is it in a tree or on the ground? Is it in water or on land?

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

Size

It is helpful to compare the size of a mystery bird with birds that you are already familiar with. For example, is the bird larger or smaller than **a sparrow, a robin, or a crow?**

Shape

Use your free time to become familiar with silhouettes. These will quickly inform you of a bird's **size, proportions, and posture**, eliminating many groups of birds at once. Pay special attention to features that could make it unique, such as type of bill and length of tail. **A bird's shape is more often than not a better identifier than their colors.**

Posture

Watch the way birds position themselves. **Does the bird sit upright, like a finch, or does it lean forward, like a sparrow?** Posture will help you distinguish between two birds with similar proportions.

