

SIMPLY SONGBIRDS





Do we need birds? Do birds matter?

Birds fascinate the human mind in ways that other animals cannot – their flight inspires us; their songs enliven us; their beauty and diversity transfix us; their presence often soothes us.

Birds matter and likely you also believe that we **do** need birds. Birds are very important environmental indicators, helping us see the environmental impacts, negative or positive, of human activities that are either visible or undetectable to the human eye. The expression “canary in a coal mine” speaks directly to birds’ value as indicators of environmental quality. Changes in the health of individual birds, or in the health or size of entire populations of birds, provide us with important signals of environmental change.

What’s more, because bird watching and collection of detailed bird observations have been common hobbies for many decades, we have the ability to see trends in environmental change by looking at changes in bird populations over time.

Birds matter also because they are all around us – as Sir Attenborough suggests, they are perhaps our best, universal connection to nature for this reason. *Can you imagine describing a spring morning to anyone without mentioning singing birds?* We thought not. There are of course many other reasons why birds matter. But what really, truly matters is this: Why do birds matter to you? If you don’t yet know the answer, let us help you explore the question within our series of e-Books.



Hermit Thrush

What you will learn in this e-Book

This e-Book will introduce you to fun audio vignettes of several bird species found in eastern Ontario, and in some case many other parts of Canada, that have been grouped together according to a certain theme. You’ll learn each species’ English and French common name, as well as a few fun facts, anecdotes or historical points about

them. In addition you'll get a photo and verbal description of what each bird looks like, with some added tips to help you differentiate some lookalike species that are easily confused 'in the field'. Perhaps most importantly, an example of the song or call of each species and a description of its basic life history are provided in each audio vignette.

What types of birds they will learn about in this small e-Book

This e-Book highlights select Songbirds in Canada: [\(you can click on a bird's name to learn more\)](#)

- Alder Flycatcher
- Eastern Bluebird
- Red-eyed Vireo
- Warbling Vireo
- Blue-headed Vireo
- Hermit Thrush
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Carolina Wren
- Marsh Wren
- Veery

Birds and nearby nature

What is nearby nature? It's nature right where you live – the examples of nature can be found all around you, from the bee pollinating a flower in a planter box on your windowsill, to your backyard, to your community's park, to an overlooked meadow or patch of forest you pass on your daily commute.



Carolina Wren

Nearby nature isn't a substitute for the wild spaces we love, such as national parks or wild seascapes, but it is a place where we can connect with nature easily. For many of us, the best expression of nearby nature is probably birds. Birds flit and fly from place to place through our human landscapes reminding us that, if we do things right, they can find sustenance and habitat in our built-up world. And to the amazement of many, the birds we encounter seasonally in the towns and cities of our country are winged ambassadors, travelling throughout the hemisphere from the far north to the far south, and all places in between.

Birds represent some of the most accessible wildlife with which can interact in nearby nature. In this way, birds are a kind of 'gateway' creature to get people interested in the wildlife – and its habitat – that's found all around them. Birds remind us that we are not alone on this planet and that how we live can either help, or hinder, our wild neighbours.

It's wonderful that you are interested in learning more about bird species and please enjoy!



The **Alder Flycatcher** is very similar to the Willow Flycatcher as they look exactly alike and have overlapping ranges. The main ways to tell these birds apart are from their song, stubbornness and house-keeping habits.



Photo by Carlos Escamilla from Flickr



The **Blue-headed Vireo** males and females share duties when it comes to incubating their eggs, but there's an element of tag-team wrestling involved in this role-sharing.



The **Carolina Wren** is a relative newcomer to our region, having only really started appearing in southern Ontario in the last 30 years or so. As suggested by its name, this species has historically been a bird of the Southeast US and parts of Mexico.



Photo by Jason Paluck



The **Eastern Bluebird** is one of eastern Canada's most colourful species of birds. The bluebirds song is a raspy flute like mix of a warble and a whistle, similar to a robins song but with shorter phrases and more chattering.



The **Hermit Thrush** breeds in the southern Ontario region in all forest types, where their nests are located low in vegetation or on the ground. They can often be spotted or heard near clearings or along trails in wooded areas.



Photo by Phil Myers



Photo by Jim Dubois

Despite its size and secretive ways, the **Marsh Wren** is no bird to mess with! Competition for food and territory leads this tiny songbird to plunder and remove the nests of other wetland birds twice its size.



The song of the **Red-eyed Vireo** has an intonation which makes it sound like a series of questions and answers.



Despite its name that implies the **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** is “little”, the female of this tiny songbird can lay up to 12 eggs. As for the male, it will chase away predators many times his size.



Have you ever walked through the forest, and heard what seems to be a bird call through a spiraling metal pipe, and wondered what in the world makes that call? It is the **Veery**.



Photo by Phil Myers

The **Warbling Vireo**, known in French as Viréo mélodieux, is a very vocal bird that sings regularly throughout the day in order to defend its nesting territory. Its melody sounds somewhat like a wind-up toy.

Thank You!



It's wonderful that you care about nature and are keen to learn about the many bird species nearby you.

Our NatureHood program inspires Canadians like you to seek out and learn about nearby nature. Likely you've already discovered that spending time in nature is good for your heart, mind and soul.

Get closer to nature by preparing your backyard for songbirds in any season!

Winter: Provide cover by leaving all vegetation that could be used as shelter.

Spring: Fill your garden with native plants.

Summer: Place a bird feeder in your yard close to trees or shrubs.

Fall: Be festive and welcome birds with this **DIY Gourd Feeder!**

About Nature Canada:

For over 75 years, Nature Canada has been your voice for nature. Together we defend wildlife and protect wilderness in your province and across the country – places so you can spot wildlife and experience the joys of nature. And we inspire more Canadians to connect and value nature in our lives.



Eastern Bluebird

With the support of caring people like you, we've helped preserve 63 million acres of parks and wildlife areas and protect countless, cherished species that depend on this habitat -- from butterflies to birds to bears.

You can help protect animals, plants and many special areas that all make up our beautiful country with a donation to Nature Canada today.



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