

The Great Backyard BIlympics: Nature Decathlon

See the final page for some helpful resources, including a size reference chart. Happy birding!

American Crow



Sleek and black. Common Ravens look similar but are far less common in urban areas and much larger, with a scruffy appearance. Makes a large variety of croaking calls.



American Goldfinch



Look for bright yellow body, with orange beaks and legs. Dark wings with white wing bars on both sexes. Has a “laughing” call while in flight, may also sing: “Potato-chip. Potato-chip n’ dip”

Female vs. Male

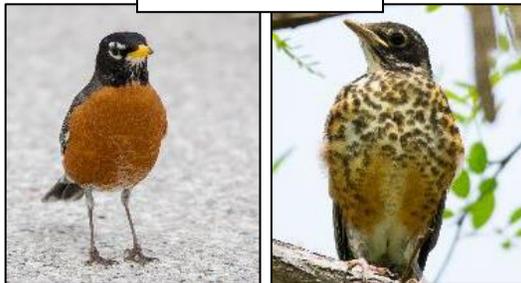


American Robin



Red/orange-breasted with dark head and wings. White eye-ring on adults. Young have mottled chest with dark head and wings. Sings beautiful, complex songs all spring long.

Adult vs. Juvenile



Black-Capped Chickadee



Often travelling in flocks. Beige-grey body with dark wings, chin, and cap. Bold white streak across cheek. Listen for their “chicka-dee-dee” or “cheeseburger” calls!



The Great Backyard BIlympics: Nature Decathlon

Blue Jay

Vibrantly blue, white, and black patterning. Large crest on head. Often seen in groups and very vocal, Blue Jays have a wide variety of calls, and will even mimic other species!



Brown-headed Cowbird

Males and females have a brown head, males have a darker brown head and inky black body, and females have mostly buff-brown bodies. Very high-pitched, gurgle song followed by a thin whistle.

Male vs. Female



Cedar Waxwing

Brown upper body, beige-yellow lower. Bold black mask across eyes and upright crest on head. Listen for a soft, high-pitched “bzee” call. Often travels in large groups, feeding on fruiting trees.



Chipping Sparrow

Watch for a bright, rust-colored cap, grey body, and black and beige streaking on wings. Their high-pitched trilling song is about 3.5 seconds long.



The Great Backyard BIlympics: Nature Decathlon

Cooper's Hawk



Pale underside with rust-colored bars. Blue-gray wings, back, and head. Look for a long tail if in flight and upright posture when perched. Bright red eye visible with a close view.



Common Grackle



Very common in urban areas. Small-medium in size, often appears to be black but has iridescent multi-coloration in the sun. Makes a variety of chipping and whistling calls. Long, squared tail.



Downy Woodpecker



Ontario's smallest woodpecker has a white underside and black wings with prominent white speckles and barring. The beak is very small, about 1/2 the length of the head. Look for bright red on the back of the male's head.

Male vs. Female



Eastern Phoebe



Off-white to buff underside, medium grey upper, with darker wings. This bird is often seen singing its loud "Phoebe!" song in a buzzy voice, and performing exciting aerial acrobatics as it catches insects! The bill is completely black, where it will be bi-coloured on other similar flycatcher birds.



The Great Backyard BIlympics: Nature Decathlon

Hairy Woodpecker

White underside with dark wings, and prominent white speckled bars on the wings. The male has a bright red patch on the back of its head. The beak is long on this woodpecker, approximately the same length as the rest of the head. Use this to distinguish it from the Downy woodpecker.

Male vs. Female



House Finch

Small with a thick, triangular beak. Female is buff-brown on top with white underside that has prominent lateral streaking. Male has brown wings, and bright red head, chest, and upper back. More strawberry than purple-hued (Purple finch!).
Common at feeders.

Male
vs.
Female



House Sparrow

Light grey underside, reddish-brown upper. A distinct black bib on the throat on the male. Females have gray undersides and brown streaking on wings, and a distinct light stipe behind eyes.
Common visitors of backyard feeders!

Male vs. Female



Mourning Dove

Plump in appearance when perched, soft gray coloration with dark speckling across wings. Very common in urban areas, the song is a soft and slow "perch-coo-coo-oo" heard mostly at dusk and dawn.



The Great Backyard BIOLympics: Nature Decathlon

Northern Cardinal

Look for a prominent crest. Males are vibrant red, females have buff-beige body with rusty-red crest, tail, wings. Males loudly sing “*teacher-teacher-teacher*” from treetops in spring and summer.

Male vs. Female



Northern Flicker

Often seen foraging on the ground, it is a common backyard resident near wooded areas. Appears brown overall, with a vibrant red cap on back of head, black wing bars / speckles on body, and vibrantly colored orange/yellow primary feather shafts on wings.



Purple Finch

Males have brown wings, white lower body, and vibrant, raspberry-hued head and upper body (see House Finch for telling ID). Color fades significantly below neck. Females have pronounced white brow, mottled streaking on sides and white beneath.

Male vs. Female



Red-tailed Hawk

White chest, dark mottled “belly band” mid-body. The wings and tail are broad, and fan outward in flight. The tail is rusty/red in appearance. The call is the typical sound associated with birds of prey, a hoarse “*kee-eeee-arr*” usually heard when soaring.



The Great Backyard BIlympics: Nature Decathlon

Red-winged Blackbird

Common at soggy roadsides, marshes, and surrounding areas. Male is inky black with a vibrant red patch on its shoulders. Females have dark brown upperparts, with brown streaking on lower areas. Listen for sharp “chit” and “check” calls, as well as their “*conk-la-reee*” song.

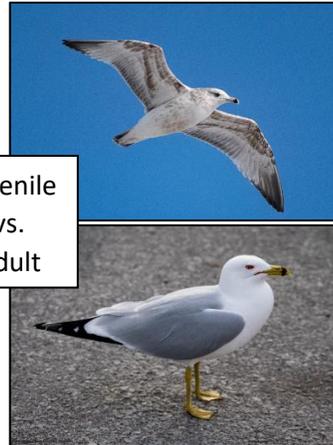
Male vs. Female



Ring-billed Gull

One of the most common birds seen in southern Ontario, found near and around various types of waterbodies. Bodies can vary from brilliant white to speckled brown. Bright yellow bill has a black ring around the tip, and wings are soft gray fading to black tips

Juvenile
vs.
Adult



Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Males are vibrantly colored with red chests, white lower parts, and black head, back and wings. Females are mottled brown with cream-colored chest, and a prominent white brow. Look for large, triangular beak. Singing males sound like robins but in a high, clearer pitch.

Male vs. Female



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Quick-moving visitor to flowering plants or hummingbird feeders. Males emerald green back and sides, with ruby-red patch on throat, which can appear dark/black in some light. Females lack the red throat. Fast flyers that are only likely to be seen for a few seconds.



The Great Backyard BIlympics: Nature Decathlon

Song Sparrow



Rich brown streaking on sides, dark spot on chest and dark “malar” stripes, or moustache. Mottled brown and white upperparts. Often perched singing on eye-level branches. Their loud song begins in 2 – 6 short notes before opening into a trilling song with several longer notes.



White-breasted Nuthatch



Resident of wooded areas and a frequent visitor to backyard feeders (especially suet!). Their inky black caps, white face and lower body, and grey wings are distinct, along with the thin, upward-pointed beak.



White-crowned Sparrow



Gray-bodied sparrow with pointed head shape. Adults have bold black and white stripes on head. Wings have black and brown streaks. Song has a whistling introduction and a series of jumbled whistles, followed by a buzzy trill at the end.



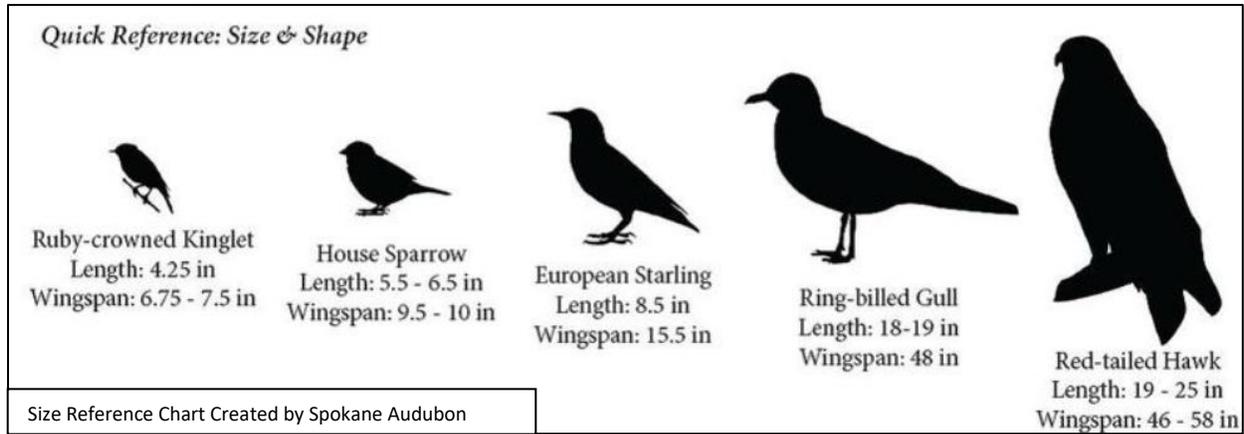
White-throated Sparrow



Quickly identified by the yellow patch on their brow, white brow stripe and white throat. Mottled brown back and grey underparts. Their song is a very clear “*Oh-sweet-Canada, Canada, Canada*”



The Great Backyard BIlympics: Nature Decathlon



For more detailed identification tools, audio recordings of the songs, and other tips, visit:
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/>