



Basic Bird Classification

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**Goal:
Identify
30 species**



Grouping Categories of Birds

- **Major groups:** shorebirds, sea birds, wading birds, raptors, song birds, waterfowl, game birds, ...
- **Bird families:** sandpipers, gulls, herons, woodpeckers, swallows, thrushes, sparrows, ...
- **Specific species:** Song Sparrow, Great Blue Heron, Western Tanager, Barn Swallow,

Methodology of Classification

- **Size**
- **Silhouette (shape)**
- **Behavior**
- **Habitat**
- **Sound**
- **Plumage (male/female, breeding/non-breeding)**
- **Bill, legs, other distinguishing characteristics**





Size

- **Very large:** heron, eagle, swan, raven
- **Large:** duck, goose, crow, hawk, pigeon
- **Medium:** robin, blackbird, starling, towhee
- **Small:** sparrow, warbler, finch, swallow
- **Tiny:** hummingbird, kinglet, chickadee, bushtit



Family Silhouette



Behavior

- **Soaring overhead:** hawks, swallows, swifts, ...



- **Swimming on water:** ducks, grebes, ...

- **Eating seeds on ground:** sparrows, quail, ...

- **Jumping quickly from branch to branch:** warblers, kinglets, ...



- **Climbing up the trunk of a tree:** woodpeckers, creepers, ...

- **Running on ground:** quail, sparrows, ...

- **Flycatching:** flycatchers, hummingbirds, bluebirds, ...



Habitat

- **Offshore (ocean):** puffins, shearwaters, ...
- **Seashore (estuary, beach, ...):** sandpipers ...
- **Riparian (stream bed, river, ...):** tanagers, flycatchers, kingfisher ...
- **Marsh (grass, reeds, ponds, ...):** wrens, sparrows, ducks, blackbirds, herons ...
- **Forest (mature, regrowth, edge, ...):** kinglets, thrushes, woodpeckers, ...
- **Mountain (meadow, rocks, ice, ...):** bluebirds, finches, grouse, hawks, ...

Sound

- Songs
- Calls
- Other (wings, pecking, beak snapping, tail, ...)

- Species specific: Belted Kingfisher, Canyon Wren, Barred Owl
- Family specific: Corvids, wrens, finches

Plumage Pattern

- **Head, wings, beak shape, tail, belly, breast, ...**



- **Species specific – time to consult the bird book! Or take notes/pictures and then consult the bird book back in the car**

Chickadees



Chestnut-backed Chickadee



Black-capped Chickadee



Thrushes



American Robin



Varied Thrush



Wrens



Bewick's Wren



Marsh Wren



Pacific Wren

Corvids



Common Raven

Steller's Jay



American Crow

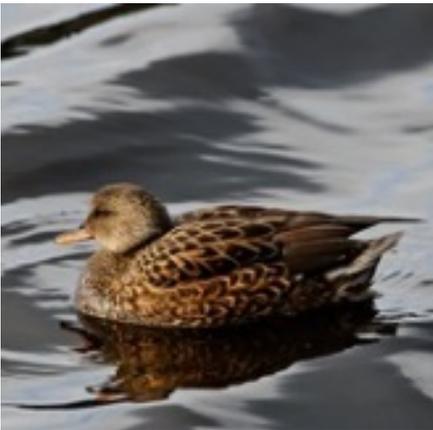
Gray Jay

Ducks

Gadwall



Mallard

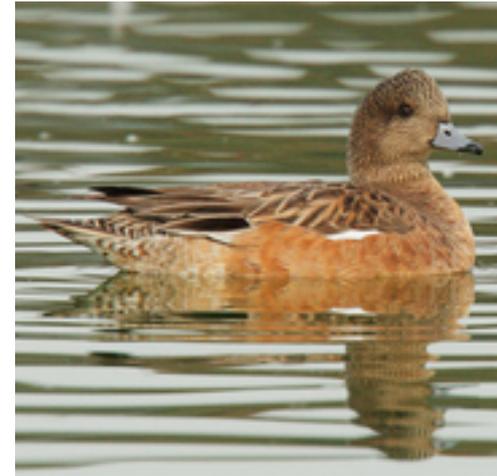


Wintering Ducks

Green-winged Teal



American Wigeon



Swallows



Violet-green Swallow



Barn Swallow

Tree Swallow



Hawk-like Birds



**Red-tailed
Hawk**



Bald Eagle



Osprey



**Turkey
Vulture**

Review

- **Use habitat, range, and season to prepare for what you might see**
- **Associate size, silhouette, and behavior with specific bird families**
- **Field characteristics: song and plumage pattern to identify species**



American Goldfinch

Two Common Woodpeckers

The Pileated Woodpecker

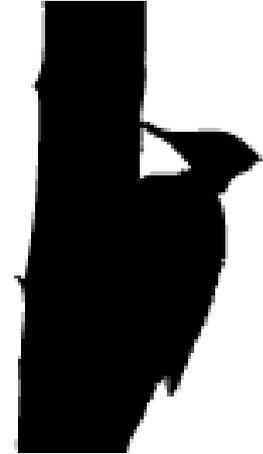
- Is one of the biggest forest birds
- Prefers forest with tall trees
- Sports a striking, red crest

The Northern Flicker

- Well-adapted to urban habitat
- Has distinctive plumage
- Is smaller than the Pileated

Woodpecker

But what happens when you are in an area where their range overlaps, and you can't see the bird?



Pileated Woodpecker



Northern Flicker



Improving Birding

- **Buy a bird field guide or app (or both)**
- **Learn silhouettes of bird families**
- **Buy a bird finding book**
- **Get a checklist for the area you are visiting**
(ask at visitors' centers or search the internet)
- **Start a “life list”**
- **Go birding** *(especially with people more knowledgeable than you)*
- **Get a good pair of binoculars (size 8X42)**
- **Learn to recognize bird songs and calls**

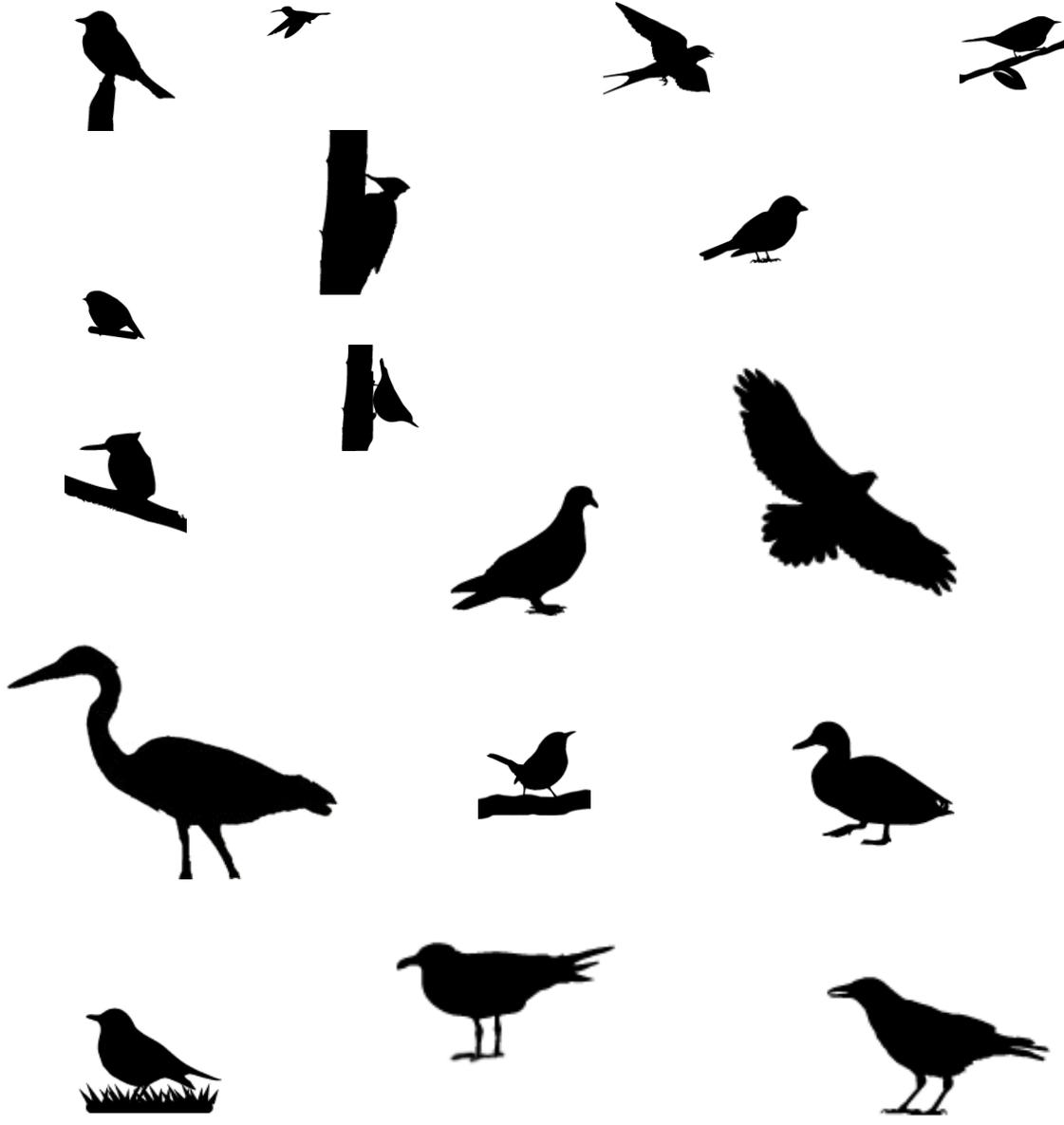
Good Sources

Books and Audio:

- Sibley and National Geographic guides, see also the Western versions for handy use in the field
- A Birder's Guide to Washington – where to go birding
- Bird Songs of the Pacific Northwest (5 CD set)

Online Sources:

- www.birdweb.org – best site for WA birds
- www.allaboutbirds.org – Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- ebird.org - a real-time, online checklist program



Distinctive Songs & Calls

Marsh



Common Yellowthroat

Brushy canyon



Canyon Wren

Dense forest



Red-breasted Nuthatch

Audio from:

www.xeno-canto.org

Images from:

Jeffrey Nystuen, Vicki King

BirdWeb

www.birdweb.org

**Cornell Laboratory of
Ornithology**

www.allaboutbirds.org