

# UTOWN@UBC Nature Club



**Bird  
Guide**

**Make new friends while getting to know your  
human, plant and animal neighbours!**



a place of mind



ubcbotanicalgarden  
& centre for plant research



## American Robin

**Sound:** Robins have one of the most familiar bird songs, a string of clear whistles that sounds like “cheerily cheer-up cheerio”, sung over and over.

**Size:** 25 centimeters.

**Shape:** Robins have round bodies, long legs, and fairly long tails.

**Colour Pattern:** American robins have grey backs with red breasts and upper bellies, dark heads and white underparts. Males have darker heads than females.

**Habitat:** They are common in grassy habitats like gardens, parks, backyards, golf courses, and pastures, as well as woodlands and pine forests.

**Behaviour:** Robins are commonly seen on grassy lawns tugging earthworms out of the ground. Unlike many other small birds that hop on the ground, robins run or walk.

Photo: Mdf, used from wikipedia.org through a creative common licence. Content from allaboutbirds.org



## Bald Eagle

**Sound:** The Bald Eagle’s call is a series of high pitched whistles and piping notes. People are often surprised by how “weak” this impressive bird sounds.

**Size:** 71-96 centimeters, females are larger than males.

**Shape:** Bald Eagles have heavy bodies, large heads and broad wings. Their bills are hooked and powerful looking.

**Colour Patten:** Adult Bald Eagles have a very distinct colour pattern. They have brown bodies and wings, and white heads and tails. Young Bald Eagles can be trickier to identify. Their heads are mostly dark and their wings and body are dark with some white mottling. The feet and beaks of young and adult Bald Eagles are yellow.

**Habitat:** Bald Eagles are often found in forested areas near water.

**Behaviour:** Bald Eagles fly by slowly flapping their wings or soaring with their wings held flat. They perch in tall, mature trees or on the ground. They often steal food from other birds, and occasionally, mammals. In the winter they may be found in large groups.

Photo: purchased stock photography from istock.com. Content from allaboutbirds.org



## Black-Capped Chickadee

**Sound:** Their song can be a clear, fluted “fee-bee” or a drawn-out “chick-a-dee-dee-dee”.

**Size:** 14 centimeters.

**Shape:** Black-capped chickadees have large heads and short necks which make them look quite round. They also have long, narrow tails and short bills.

**Colour Pattern:** Black-capped chickadees have a black cap and throat, white cheeks and a grey back. Their white bellies have olive-buff on the sides. Their wings are grey with white edges.

**Habitat:** Chickadees are found in areas that have trees or shrubs, such as forests, woodlands, residential neighbourhoods and parks.

**Behaviour:** Commonly found at bird feeders, chickadees usually stay just long enough to grab a seed to eat somewhere else. They are often found in flocks and have a bouncy flight.

Photo: Alan D. Wilson, [www.naturespicsonline.com](http://www.naturespicsonline.com), reused from [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) though a creative common licence. Content from [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org)



## Barred Owl

**Sound:** The Barred Owl call is a series of hoots that sounds like “who-cooks-for-you, who-cooks-for-you-all”.

**Size:** 43-50 centimeters, females are larger than males.

**Shape:** The barred owl has a round head with no ear tufts. It has a ruff of feathers across its upper breast.

**Colour Pattern:** Its body and back are brownish-grey with whitish or buff bars and it has dark eyes. Its underparts are whitish with dark brown streaks; except for the upper chest where it has dark brown barring.

**Habitat:** Barred Owls are found in forested areas. They nest in deciduous trees.

**Behaviour:** Barred Owls can be tricky to spot because they are nocturnal, although they will occasionally vocalize during the day. They hunt from high perches, where they look and listen for prey. They can be aggressive, flying at or fighting with rivals over territory.

Photo: flickr user ralph and jenny, used though a creative common licence. Content from [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org)





## Dark-eyed Junco

**Sound:** The Dark-eyed Junco's song is high pitched. It can be heard as the bird forages for food or when it takes short, low flights through bushes or trees. It can also make a ringing, metallic trill.

**Size:** 15-17 centimeters.

**Shape:** Dark-eyed Junco's have a round head, short bill and long tail.

**Colour Pattern:** In BC, dark-eyed juncos are dark brown with black heads, a pink bill and white outer tail feathers. The white outer tail feathers are most visible when the bird flies.

**Habitat:** Juncos are quite adaptable and can be found in a variety of habitats, such as forests, open woodlands, fields, parks, roadsides, and backyards.

**Behaviour:** These birds are almost always found on the ground, hopping around as they look for food.

Photo: Walter Siegmund, reused from wikipedia.org through a creative common licence. Content from allaboutbirds.org



## Great Blue Heron

**Sound:** Great Blue Herons are most vocal during breeding season, when they greet their partners at the nest with a squawking "roh-roh-roh".

**Size:** 97-137 centimeters.

**Shape:** Its bill is long and thick. Feather plumes on its head, chest and body make it look shaggy. Its neck is long and curls into an s-shape when it flies. Its long, thin legs trail behind its body when it flies.

**Colour Pattern:** These birds are blue-grey with a black and white crown. Their bill is yellow and grey.

**Habitat:** Great Blue Herons can be found in salt water and fresh water habitats, grasslands and farm fields. When breeding they can be found in large colonies called "heronries".

**Behaviour:** Great Blue Herons are often seen along the coast or in fields, standing still or wading slowly, as they hunt on their own. They stab their prey with a quick thrust of their beak. They perform elaborate courtship displays in their breeding nests.

Photo: flickr user mikebaird, used through a creative common licence. Content from allaboutbirds.org



## House Finch

**Sound:** Their song is a long series of warbled notes ending in a “zeeee.”

**Size:** 15 centimeters.

**Shape:** Typical finch body shape with fairly large beaks, long head and short wings.

**Colour Pattern:** Adult males are red around the face and upper breast, with streaky brown backs, bellies and tails. Females are plain greyish-brown with few distinguishing markings.

**Habitat:** House finches can often be seen in urban areas including parks and backyards, as well as around farms and forest edges.

**Behaviour:** House finches are social birds that commonly collect at bird feeders and nearby trees. They also feed on the ground and in trees. They have a bouncy flight.



## Mallard Duck

**Sound:** Females have a loud “quack, quack, quack” call.

**Size:** 50-65 centimeters.

**Shape:** Mallards are large dabbling ducks with webbed feet.

**Colour Pattern:** Males have glossy green heads, chestnut-brown chests and bright yellow bills. Their plumage changes slightly throughout the year. Females are mottled brown with a dull orange and black bill.

**Habitat:** Mallards are tolerant of humans and are found in and around water.

**Behaviour:** Mallards are dabblers. They feed at the surface of the water, tipped head first under the water, or occasionally, by diving under the water. They will also graze on land.





## Northern Flicker

**Sound:** The Northern Flicker's song rises and falls in volume during its loud, rolling rattle. The tone of its song is piercing.

**Size:** 32-36 centimeters.

**Shape:** These woodpeckers have a slim, rounded head, slightly down-curved bill, and long tail.

**Colour Pattern:** Flickers generally appear brownish in colour with small black spots, bars and crescents over their bodies. They have a black bib and red cheeks. In western North America, the undersides of the wing and tail feathers are bright red (in the East they are yellow).

**Habitat:** Flickers are relatively common in open habitats near trees, including woodlands, yards and parks.

**Behaviour:** Unlike most woodpeckers, Northern Flickers spend a lot of time on the ground. When they are in trees, they often perch on branches instead of on the trunk. They fly with an up-and-down motion.

Photo: John Benson, reused from wikipedia.org through a creative common licence. Content from allaboutbirds.org



## Pacific Wren

Previously known as the Winter Wren in B.C.  
You may find it listed as such in field guides.

**Sound:** Their song is an incredibly complex stream of notes and trills that lasts for 5-10 seconds, with up to 36 notes per second.

**Size:** 10 centimeters.

**Shape:** Pacific wrens have a rounded body, with a relatively short tail. Like all wrens, their tail is usually cocked upward. They have a thin, pointed bill.

**Colour Pattern:** They are a fairly uniform dark brown colour. The banded pattern on their backs and bellies can be difficult to see from a distance.

**Habitat:** They can be found most often in evergreen forests. They prefer areas with fallen logs and other dead wood.

**Behaviour:** Pacific wrens behave like little mice in shrubby and treed areas, hopping around and feeding in low shrubs, on the ground, near the bases of trees, and around fallen dead wood.

Photo: Darren Irwin. Content from allaboutbirds.org



## Song Sparrow

**Sound:** Their song is quite musical and consists of three short notes followed by a varied trill.

**Size:** 15-19 centimeters.

**Shape:** Typical sparrow shape, with a relatively short and stout bill. The tail is long and rounded.

**Color Pattern:** Song Sparrows have streaky brown upper bodies. Their bellies are white with dark brown streaks. A dark brown spot is sometimes visible in the middle of their breast.

**Habitat:** Song sparrows are common in nearly all open habitats, including backyards, bird feeders, forest edges, marshes and overgrown fields.

**Behaviour:** Song sparrows are common bird feeder visitors. They are often found on low branches in thick vegetation, sometimes moving onto open ground to find food. They have a bouncy, fluttering flight.



## Spotted Towhee

**Sound:** The Spotted Towhee's song is short, lasting about 1.5 seconds. It sounds a bit like a cat meowing.

**Size:** 18-19 centimeters.

**Shape:** Sparrow-shaped with a thick, pointed bill, short neck, chunky body, and long, rounded tail.

**Colour Pattern:** Males have dark black backs, heads, throats, wings and tails; their wings and backs have noticeable white spots. Their flanks are red and their bellies are white. Females have the same pattern but are brown where males are black.

**Habitat:** Towhees can be found in open, shrubby habitat such as backyards, forest edges and overgrown fields.

**Behaviour:** Spotted Towhees hop around in the leaf litter covering the ground scratching for food. They sometimes search for insects and fruits on the lower branches of shrubs.

[illegible][illegible]