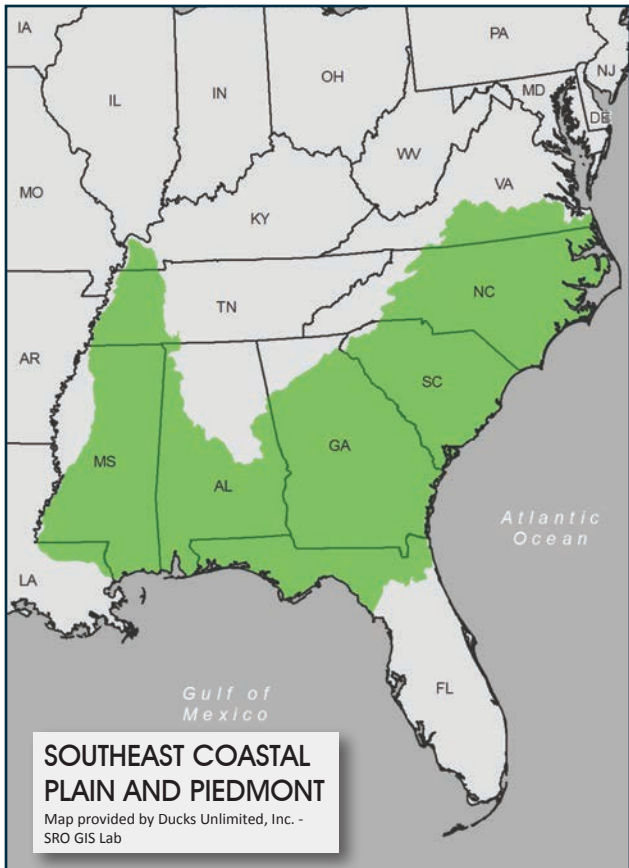


Pocket Guide to  
Pine and Grassland Birds of  
the Southeast Coastal Plain



East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture



## SOUTHEAST COASTAL PLAIN AND PIEDMONT

Map provided by Ducks Unlimited, Inc. -  
SRO GIS Lab

# Pocket Guide to Pine and Grassland Birds of the Southeast Coastal Plain



## EAST GULF COASTAL PLAIN JOINT VENTURE

The East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture is a self-directed partnership of 14 organizations with a shared mission to protect and restore bird populations by coordinating the effective conservation of key habitats of the Southeast Coastal Plain.

### **Contact Us**

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**Cover Photo:** Eastern Meadowlark - photo by Ed Schneider

The findings and conclusions in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the partners.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Pocket Guide to Pine and Grassland Birds of the Southeast Coastal Plain offers users a means to identify bird species associated with two ecologically important, yet threatened, upland habitats in the Southeast Coastal Plain of the United States: pine woodlands and eastern interior grasslands. The guide also provides conservation tips for maintaining and improving these habitats, which in turn benefits the birds which rely on them.

A map detailing the geography of the Southeast is situated at the beginning of this guide. The following section describes characteristics of pine and grassland habitats. Specifically, forests, savannahs and woodlands, grasslands, and working lands and their plant species are detailed. Next is a section on conservation challenges: changes to the landscape which threaten the stability and diversity of bird populations and information on conservation practices which can mitigate them. Also included is contact information for state organizations and regional initiatives which may provide additional information and support. Finally, we feature profiles for 40 upland bird species, including the species' common and scientific name, its identifying characteristics, diet, habitats, seasonality, and an interesting fact.

Whether you are a landowner, land manager, or outdoor enthusiast, we hope you enjoy this guide to upland birds found in the Southeast Coastal Plain.

# PINE AND GRASSLAND HABITATS IN THE SOUTHEAST COASTAL PLAIN

The Southeast Coastal Plain region supports a high diversity of habitats, including closed-canopy forests, open-pine woodlands and savannas, and grasslands. Since European settlement, natural habitats have been lost and degraded by interruption of ecological processes such as fire. Many natural areas have been converted to herbaceous row crops and pastures. Forests in the Southeast today tend to have high densities of small trees with brushy understories, contrasting with the open canopies, large trees, and prairie-like ground covers that once prevailed.

## Pine Woodlands and Savannas

Pine woodlands and savannas have naturally open, pine-dominated canopies and grassy, often prairie-like ground



Photo courtesy of LDWF

Wet Pine Savannas support diverse and unique understory plant species.

covers. They occur in various landscape settings and are maintained by recurring fire. Prior to human settlement of the Southeast Coastal Plain, fires were ignited by lightning strikes. Native Americans contributed to the maintenance of these systems by using fire as a management tool. Today, prescribed fire implemented by landowners and managers is essential to maintaining the natural integrity of pine woodlands and savannas. Additionally, when prescribed fire cannot be used, herbicides can be applied to prevent encroachment by hardwoods.

### *Longleaf Pine Woodlands*

Longleaf Pine woodlands and savannas are defined by the presence of Longleaf Pine as the dominant canopy tree and, usually, a diverse herbaceous cover. Common grasses in Longleaf systems include wiregrass, bluestems, and



Photo courtesy of LDWF

Regular prescribed fire is essential to well managed Longleaf Pine Woodlands.

Pineywoods Dropseed. Longleaf Pine woodlands also support many flowering forbs, including blazing stars and pitcher plants.

### *Shortleaf Pine Woodlands*

Shortleaf Pine/Oak-Hickory woodlands are relatively open and often dominated by grassy ground covers. Shortleaf Pine is a conspicuous canopy tree intermixed with oaks such as Southern Red Oak, Post Oak, and Black-jack Oak. Other canopy trees may include Mockernut Hickory and Blackgum. These woodlands have a longer natural fire return interval than Longleaf Pine communities. Frequently burned woodlands tend to have a greater amount of Shortleaf Pine, more open canopy structures, and a well-developed herbaceous ground cover. Without adequate fire, Shortleaf Pine will decline along with light-loving ground cover species.



Photo by John Gruchy

Mixed Shortleaf and Loblolly Pine Woodland with grassy understory.





Photo by John Gruchy

Thinning and burning can greatly increase the bird habitat value of pine plantations.

### ***Pine Plantations***

Pine plantations usually consist of Loblolly Pine planted (sometimes densely) and managed for wood products such as pulp and sawtimber. Typical production-oriented plantations may support a subset of grassland and open-pine birds during early stages of regeneration, but the habitat value is usually diminished as the stand matures and the canopy closes. While fire is not a standard tool in many plantations, with management, these systems have potential to provide good bird habitat. Thinning the stand to open the canopy and frequently burning on a two to three year rotation stimulates forb and grass growth and can allow these systems to function as natural pine woodlands and provide habitat for a diversity of pine and grassland bird species.

### Grasslands

Natural grasslands are treeless, or nearly so. Herbaceous vegetation varies from dense and robust, in the case of prairies, to sparse on glades where soil is shallow and sites are harsh. Conspicuous plant families represented in grasslands include grasses, sunflowers, and legumes.

### Prairies

Prairies are naturally treeless habitats usually with dense and continuous herbaceous vegetation that is typically diverse and dominated by grasses, sedges, and forbs. Prairies are maintained by a combination of soil-related factors and fire. Recurring fire precludes forest or shrub-land development and maintains grasslands. Blackland Prairie is an example of a prairie type that occurs in the Black Belt of Alabama and Mississippi and on the Jackson Prai-



Photo by Claude Jenkins

Prescribed fire is used to maintain this Native Prairie in the Black Belt region.

rie in Mississippi. Characteristic plants of Blackland Prairies include Little Bluestem, Sideoats Grama, Indiangrass, and Compassplant.

### ***Glades and Barrens***

Glades and barrens are small grasslands that owe their existence largely to soil-related factors, although fire can be an important process. A glade is an opening in an otherwise wooded landscape due to the presence of rock at or near the surface. Granite, limestone, and sandstone glades are found in the Southeast Coastal Plain and Piedmont. Barrens are openings where soils are extreme enough to prevent development of woody communities.



Photo courtesy of LDWF

Sandstone glades are openings found in wooded landscapes created by rock at or near the surface.



Photo by Rob Holbrook

The mixture of grasses and forbs in Old Field habitat attracts many grassland birds.

### ***Old Fields***

Old fields are grasslands developed on recently farmed or otherwise disturbed ground. These grasslands support a mix of early-successional grasses and forbs and are valuable to birds because they provide food and habitat. Characteristic old field plants include goldenrods, ragweed, broomsedges, and partridge pea.

### ***Pastures***

Pastures support exotic grasses, such as Bahiagrass, Bermudagrass, and Tall Fescue, which are planted and managed to produce forage for livestock. Pastures are maintained by mowing and grazing of livestock. The habitat value of these open, grassy areas for most grassland birds generally is limited by marginal food resources (e.g., insects and seeds) and sparse habitat structure provided by the exotic forage grasses.

## CONSERVATION CHALLENGES AND PRACTICES

### Challenges to Upland Birds in the Southeastern U.S.

Birds face many challenges in the southeastern United States due to ongoing changes in the amount, structure, and quality of their habitat. Direct habitat loss due to development and fragmentation of remaining habitat has impacted many bird species. Even in rural areas where development is less of an issue, modern “clean farming” practices have greatly reduced the edge habitats and fallow fields which support species like Northern Bobwhite and Eastern Meadowlark. Across all of these landscapes, an abundance of non-native, invasive plants like Bermudagrass, Kudzu, Cogongrass, and Chinese Privet often overtake the native plants which provide important food sources or nesting structure for birds.



Photo by Rob Holbrook

Monoculture of Cogongrass diminishes the habitat value of this open canopy pine stand.

Our birds of pine woodlands are also in decline. Commercially managed pines are often planted and managed at stocking rates which are too dense for many bird species. While cutover areas can provide good habitat during the decade of pine forest establishment, the pines soon reach canopy closure and shade out the understory habitat which is used as nesting and brooding cover.

Additionally, decades of fire suppression have changed the human perception of fire and its role in our landscape. As a result, the habitat value of many upland forests and grasslands has been greatly diminished. While prescribed fire is in fact a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk, it is not always regarded as such by the general public.

### Conservation Practices

Despite the many challenges facing southeastern birdlife, most species are quite resilient and respond readily to improved habitat conditions. Planting native, bird-friendly plants in a way which connects or enlarges existing habitat can help to reverse the negative impacts of habitat fragmentation. Frequent use of prescribed fire (two to three year return intervals) can improve both open and forested habitats, promoting the growth of plants which provide needed food and nesting structure. Wildlife biologists commonly say, “If you build it, they will come”, speaking about the development and maintenance of habitat, and there is much truth to this. It is up to you as

a landowner to make choices about how to support wildlife, including birds, on your property.

As you use this pocket guide, note that every species has a unique set of habitat requirements throughout the year. As such, landowners should not implement a “one size fits all” approach for habitat creation and maintenance on their property. Rather, landowners should work with local natural resource professionals to determine objectives for their property and the associated opportunities to manage species which that are the best fit for their land. Here are some management practices readers might implement on their land:

### ***Open Landscapes Including Agricultural Fields, Pasturelands, Grasslands, Shrublands, and Rights-of-Way***

- Develop a mosaic of nesting and brooding habitats by idling croplands or planting carefully selected native warm season grasses and wildflowers.
- Reduce the amount of non-native grasses on your property, especially Bermudagrass, Bahiagrass, and Tall Fescue, or manage these species in a way such that nesting birds will not be disturbed.
- Avoid mowing or haying during the primary nesting season (April through August), especially along field borders and drainages.
- Create brushy winter cover including native shrub hedgerows and brush piles.

- Disturb at least a third of your habitat per year, preferably in the late winter, by light disking or prescribed burning to promote bare ground, promote valuable annuals, and manage ecological succession to a shrubland.
- Use herbicides as needed to control non-native, invasive grasses, shrubs and tree species across the landscape, especially initial infestations before colonies become established.
- Otherwise, use herbicides selectively and sparingly, helping to ensure that valuable native plants such as milkweeds are not unintentionally eliminated.

### *Pine Woodlands*

- Maintain or create snags for cavity-nesting species such as woodpeckers and nuthatches.
- Commercially thin pine woodlands to low stocking rates that allow for at least 50% of the forest floor to be sunlit at noon, allowing for understory plant growth.
- Combine selective timber harvests with frequent (every two to three years) understory burning to create and manage a forest understory dominated by grasses, forbs, and shrubs.
- Use an “uneven-aged” management approach to your timberlands to promote the diversity of forest structure many birds need.
- Consider planting alternatives to Loblolly Pine, such as Longleaf or Shortleaf Pine, if the site is suitable.



- Construct brushy cover by implementing edge feathering or hinge cutting.
- Selectively target removal of rapidly encroaching tree species and understory forest invaders.

## Resources and Conservation Programs

When landowners are interested in bird conservation on their property, they first should reach out to their state wildlife agency listed below. Many of these agencies have private lands biologists or other natural resource professionals who can visit a landowner's property and develop a wildlife habitat management plan with them. Some agencies have cost-share programs for habitat creation and management or may provide technical assistance to landowners to implement these conservation practices, such as prescribed fire. Additionally, many agencies partner with local and state-level non-profit organizations to offer their services to landowners free of charge.

- Alabama - [www.outdooralabama.com](http://www.outdooralabama.com)
- Florida - [www.myfwc.com](http://www.myfwc.com)
- Georgia - [www.georgiawildlife.org](http://www.georgiawildlife.org)
- Kentucky - <http://fw.ky.gov>
- Louisiana - [www.wlf.louisiana.gov](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov)
- Mississippi - [www.mdwfp.com](http://www.mdwfp.com)
- North Carolina - [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org)
- South Carolina - [www.dnr.sc.gov](http://www.dnr.sc.gov)
- Tennessee - [www.tn.gov/twra](http://www.tn.gov/twra)
- Virginia - [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov)

The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is also a great resource for landowners interested in both wildlife and soil and water conservation on their properties. Technical assistance is always available, with financial assistance offered to eligible agricultural producers through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). EQIP is particularly helpful as it pays landowners a substantial portion of the costs for creating native grass and wildflower meadows and field borders as well as implementing proper habitat management techniques such as prescribed burning and invasive species control. To find your local office, please visit: <http://offices.usda.gov/>.

Finally, prescribed fire councils and a variety of regional habitat initiatives provide excellent technical resources and local contacts for interested landowners.

- America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative - [www.americaslongleaf.org](http://www.americaslongleaf.org)
- National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative - <http://bringbackbobwhites.org>
- Partners in Flight - <http://www.partnersinflight.org>
- Prescribed Fire Councils - <http://www.prescribedfire.net/membership/state-councils>
- Shortleaf Pine Initiative - [www.shortleafpine.net](http://www.shortleafpine.net)



Photo by Ben Robinson

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## Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*)

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**Identification:** 9.75” - Striking reddish-gray plumage. Male has a bright white throat and a bold white stripe above the eye. Female is duller brown with a buffy face.

**Diet:** Insects and seeds.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, thickets, and piney woods. Often seen on paths, roads, and field edges.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** The only quail species in the southeast U.S. named for its “bob-white” call.



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## Eastern Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*)

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**Identification:** 37” (female) to 46” (male) - Large game bird. Males can be four feet tall and greater than 20 pounds. Males have wattles on the neck and a beard on the breast. Females are smaller and lighter. Both sexes have iridescent plumage.

**Diet:** Diverse foods including seeds, fruits, insects, buds, fern fronds, and amphibians.

**Habitat:** Deciduous, pine, and mixed forests, and agricultural lands.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** In the early 1500s European explorers took domesticated Wild Turkeys from Mexico to Europe. When Europeans eventually colonized the Atlantic Coast they brought domesticated turkeys with them.



Photo by Justin Oguni

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## Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

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**Identification:** 22” - An aerial specialist with long, tapered wings and a forked tail. Charcoal black back and flight feathers. Brilliant white head and underside.

**Diet:** Insects, frogs, lizards, snakes, young birds, and occasionally bats.

**Habitat:** Open-pine habitats and bottomland hardwood forests.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Gregarious, forming large roosts in river basins before migration to South America for the winter.



Photo by James Hurt

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### Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

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**Identification:** 18” - Long-winged and long-tailed hawk with a bright white rump patch. Males are mostly gray and females and juveniles are mostly brown and buff.

**Diet:** Small mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles.

**Habitat:** Open habitats such as grasslands, pastures, marshes, and old fields. Often seen cruising low over fields and marshes searching for prey.

**Seasons:** Fall through spring.

**Interesting Fact:** Harriers have facial disks similar to owls that improve directional hearing, allowing them to locate prey more easily.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

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**Identification:** 19” - Broad, rust-colored tail, pale chest, and usually with a dark band across belly. Dark leading edge on wings. Immatures have brown tail.

**Diet:** Small mammals, birds, and reptiles.

**Habitat:** Open woodlands, particularly those adjacent to grasslands and agricultural areas.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Characteristic scream is frequently used in television and movies, erroneously attributed to Bald Eagles or vultures.



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## Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*)

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**Identification:** 12” - Gray-brown with a long tail, black spots on wings, and a relatively small head.

**Diet:** Seeds.

**Habitat:** Open habitats including woodlands, brushy areas, and rural and urban landscapes. Often seen perching on poles and utility wires.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Named for its mournful song.





Photo by Michael Seymour

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## Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*)

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**Identification:** 9.5” - Mottled brown with long wings and large white patches near wing tips. Often heard giving nasal “peent” calls. Commonly seen in lights over cities and outdoor sporting venues.

**Diet:** Mostly flying insects. Forages almost exclusively on the wing.

**Habitat:** Rural and urban habitats including open forests, grasslands, marshes, and farmlands.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Often called “bullbat” because of sound created during display flights and because flight pattern is similar to a bat.



Photo by Clyde Blum

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### Chuck-will's-widow (*Antrostomus carolinensis*)

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**Identification:** 12” - Cryptically plumaged with brown, black, and gray to blend in with surroundings. Typically detected by loud, repetitive “chuck-will’s-widow” call.

**Diet:** Insects, small birds, and bats. Crepuscular and nocturnal aerial forager.

**Habitat:** Dry forests, especially pine or mixed pine-deciduous. Often found near forest gaps or roadways.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Unable to chew or tear flesh with small, weak bill, so prey is swallowed whole.



Photo by Michael Seymour

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## Ruby-throated Hummingbird

(*Archilochus colubris*)

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**Identification:** 3.75" - Very small, with green crown, back, and wings, light belly, and thin bill. Females with a white throat and males with a ruby throat.

**Diet:** Primarily flower nectar, tree sap, and insects. Readily uses hummingbird feeders, especially during migration.

**Habitat:** Mature and second-growth deciduous forests and mixed pine-deciduous woodlands, gardens, and orchards.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall in most of the Southeast Coastal Plain. Resident in some areas.

**Interesting Fact:** The only hummingbird to nest regularly east of the Mississippi River.



Photo by Ed Schneider

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## Red-headed Woodpecker

(*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*)

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**Identification:** 9.25” - Deep scarlet red head and black back, tail, and wings. Large white patches on wings. Males and females indistinguishable. Juveniles similar but with brown head.

**Diet:** Insects, spiders, fruits, and seeds. Unlike most woodpeckers, may capture insects in flight.

**Habitat:** Open pine or mixed pine-deciduous forests and neighborhoods with mature trees with suitable nesting sites.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Caches (stores) food such as acorns, nuts, and even live insects for feeding during lean times, such as winter.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Red-bellied Woodpecker

(*Melanerpes carolinus*)

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**Identification:** 9.25” - Black-and-white barred back, gray belly sometimes with a tinge of red, and gray face. Males with red cap and nape and females with red nape only.

**Diet:** Varied diet, including insects, fruits, seeds, lizards, tree frogs, small fish, bird eggs and nestlings. Frequent visitor to bird feeders.

**Habitat:** Mixed woodlands and deciduous forests in dry uplands and swamps, and suburban areas.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** May store food in cracks and crevices of trees and fence posts.

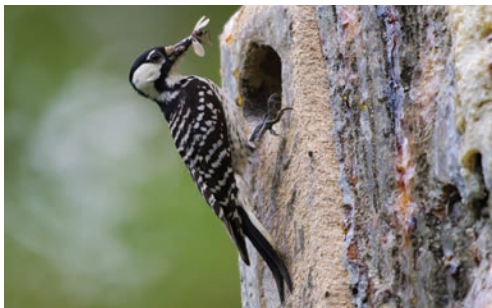


Photo courtesy of USFWS

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## Red-cockaded Woodpecker

(*Picoides borealis*)

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**Identification:** 8.5" - Black and white with a large white cheek patch and barred back and flanks.

**Diet:** Insects and other arthropods, fruits, and seeds.

**Habitat:** Open, mature pine forest, especially Longleaf Pine.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Lives in family groups and nests in living, mature pine trees. Often selects trees infected with fungus, making it easier to excavate nest cavities.



Photo by Scott Somershoe

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## Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)

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**Identification:** 12.5” - Brown face, gray nape, and brown barring on back. Chest has black bib and black spots below. Prominent white patch on rump. Males with black moustachial mark.

**Diet:** Ants and other insects.

**Habitat:** Open habitats including open forests and woodlands, residential areas, and parks. Often seen foraging on the ground.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** The Yellow-shafted Flicker occurs in the eastern United States and the Red-shafted Flicker occurs in the western United States, but they are the same species (Northern Flicker). The two forms intergrade regularly where their ranges overlap.



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### Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)

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**Identification:** 16.5” - Large sized with black body, red crest, and broad white stripe on face and neck. In flight, shows white patches on top of wings and mostly white on underside of wings.

**Diet:** Insects, fruits, and nuts.

**Habitat:** Deciduous and pine woodlands with large trees.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Excavates nest cavities often subsequently used by other species, such as birds, small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.





Photo by Dave Hawkins

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## American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)

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**Identification:** 9” - Small and colorful. Male with blue-gray crown and wings, vertical black stripes on face, and partly rufous back and tail. Female similar to male but with muted colors and no blue in the wings.

**Diet:** Insects, lizards, small snakes, birds, and mammals.

**Habitat:** Open-pine, grasslands, and other early-successional habitats. Often seen on roadside perches such as powerlines.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** May hover in flight searching for prey.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Great Crested Flycatcher

(*Myiarchus crinitus*)

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**Identification:** 8.75” - Gray face and chest, olive-brown head and back, yellow underparts, and rufous wings and tail.

**Diet:** Insects, spiders, and small fruits.

**Habitat:** Open deciduous or mixed pine-deciduous woodlands, swamps, riparian corridors, and urban areas with large trees.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Often weaves shed snakeskins into its nest.



Photo by Scott Somershoe

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## Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*)

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**Identification:** 8.5” - Dark gray upperparts, light underparts, and a white-tipped tail.

**Diet:** Insects and berries. Catches flying insects in midair.

**Habitat:** Open areas including grasslands, marshes, pastures, and old fields with scattered trees. Often seen on fencerows and wires.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Often chases larger birds such as crows and hawks away from territory.



Photo by James Hurt

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### Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

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**Identification:** 9" - Gray with black mask, white underparts, short, hooked bill, and fairly long black and white tail. Black wings show white spots in flight.

**Diet:** Insects and other small arthropods, small reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and birds.

**Habitat:** Grasslands with a mix of trees and shrubs, pastures, and crop field edges. Often seen on utility poles, wires, and fence posts.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Impales prey on thorns or barbed wire before tearing apart and eating it.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*)

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**Identification:** 11” - Blue-backed with gray belly, blue crest, white face, black necklace, stripe through the eye, and black bill.

**Diet:** Varied, including insects, seeds, fruits, bird eggs and nestlings, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals. Frequent visitor to bird feeders.

**Habitat:** Deciduous and pine woodlands, parks, and suburban and urban areas.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Excellent vocal mimic which often convincingly imitates Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks.



Photo by James Hurt

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### Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*)

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**Identification:** 4.75” - Small and gray with black crown and throat and white cheeks.

**Diet:** Insects, fruit, seeds, and flower buds. Frequent visitor to bird feeders.

**Habitat:** Deciduous and mixed woodlands, parks, and suburban and urban areas.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Caches (stores) thousands of seeds and other food items and is able to relocate them later.



Photo by Bob Howdeshell

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## Brown-headed Nuthatch (*Sitta pusilla*)

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**Identification:** 4.5” - Small with gray back, wings, and tail. White underparts, brown cap, and slightly recurved bill.

**Diet:** Mostly insects and pine seeds. Frequent visitor to suet and seed feeders in residential areas.

**Habitat:** Prefers pine forests with larger trees. Often seen creeping along tree trunks and limbs searching for food.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Uses cavities for nesting and also uses nest boxes.



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### Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*)

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**Identification:** 7” - Male mostly bright blue with rust-colored breast and sides. Female similar but with muted colors. Juvenile duller with heavily spotted back and breast.

**Diet:** Insects and small fruits.

**Habitat:** Common in open habitats, particularly pine savannahs, agricultural areas, and suburban parks. Frequently seen feeding from power lines, fences, and low-hanging branches. Regularly uses bluebird boxes.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Raises multiple broods per year (up to four in the southern U.S.). Young from previous broods may assist with care of subsequent broods.





Photo by James Hurt

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## Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*)

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**Identification:** 8.5” - Mostly gray with a black cap and tail, and rufous under tail.

**Diet:** Insect and small fruits.

**Habitat:** Dense shrubs, thickets, fencerows, abandoned farmland, and residential areas.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Relatives of mockingbirds and thrashers, regularly mimics other birds, frogs, or other sounds. Named Catbirds after their cat-like “mewww” call.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*)

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**Identification:** 5.25” - Boldly striped black and white. Males with dark cheek patches and more streaking on chest and throat than paler females.

**Diet:** Insects. Creeps along tree branches probing for prey under bark and in crevices.

**Habitat:** Deciduous or mixed deciduous-pine forests.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Has a thin, high-pitched song compared to the sound of a squeaky wheel.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*)

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**Identification:** 5” - Olive above and yellow below. Male has bright yellow throat with a black face mask. Female is duller overall without mask.

**Diet:** Insects, spiders, and seeds.

**Habitat:** Open areas such as grasslands, wetlands, hedgerows, and forest edges.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Secretive and skulking, often found in tangled vegetation and at edges of wetlands and agricultural fields.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Pine Warbler (*Setophaga pinus*)

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**Identification:** 5.5” - Yellow on head and chest, olive-gray back, and two white wing-bars. Rarely found away from pine trees during breeding season.

**Diet:** Insects, seeds, and fruits.

**Habitat:** Pine and mixed pine-deciduous forests.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Only warbler which regularly eats seeds opened by lodging them in bark crevices and cracking them open with bill.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Prairie Warbler (*Setophaga discolor*)

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**Identification:** 4.75” - Brightly colored, with yellow below, greenish-yellow above, and black streaks down sides. Sexes similar in color and pattern but females with less contrasting facial pattern.

**Diet:** Mostly insects and spiders.

**Habitat:** Shrubby open fields, regenerating forests, and open-pine woodlands.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Despite the name, frequents shrubby habitats rather than grasslands.



Photo by Ed Schneider

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## Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*)

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**Identification:** 7.5” - Olive-green above, bright yellow throat and chest, with a white belly. Distinctive white “spectacles” around the eyes.

**Diet:** Insects and berries.

**Habitat:** Brushy and shrubby vegetation along streams, forest edges, agricultural fields, and regenerating clear-cuts.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Known to frequently sing at night and mimics calls of other birds.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*)

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**Identification:** 8.5” - Males with striking rufous sides and black head, upper body, and wings. Females with similar pattern but rich brown. Both sexes with white belly.

**Diet:** Seeds, fruit, insects, spiders, and other invertebrates.

**Habitat:** Forests, forest edges, suburban yards, and parks. Prefer thick, brushy understory. Often seen foraging on ground, scratching and kicking leaf litter.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Originally named the Rufous-sided Towhee, species was split into Eastern Towhee and Spotted Towhee, which occurs in the western United States.



Photo by Ed Schneider

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## Bachman's Sparrow (*Peucaea aestivalis*)

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**Identification:** 6" - Secretive. Back streaked with rufous-brown, unstreaked buffy breast, and a white belly.

**Diet:** Insects and small seeds.

**Habitat:** Mature open-pine forests and old fields with scattered trees and a grass and forb understory.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Endemic to the southeast U.S., meaning it occurs only in this geography.





Photo by James Hurt

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## Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*)

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**Identification:** 5.5" - Brown-streaked back and wings, light gray underparts, and rufous cap. White line above the eye and dark line through the eye. Duller in winter.

**Diet:** Insects and seeds.

**Habitat:** Woodland openings and grassy areas. Often found in residential parks and lawns in foraging flocks on the ground.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Song is a long, mechanical trill and call is sharp chip note.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*)

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**Identification:** 5.75" - Small, long-tailed with a rusty cap and back, prominent white eye-ring, pink bill, and pale gray underparts.

**Diet:** Insects and small seeds.

**Habitat:** Open habitats, including brushy pastures, grasslands, and forest edges.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** In winter, found in flocks with other species such as White-throated Sparrows and Chipping Sparrows.



Photo by Ed Schneider

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## Grasshopper Sparrow

(*Ammodramus savannarum*)

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**Identification:** 5” - Small and inconspicuous. Streaked upperparts, pale and buffy underparts, with a white central-crown stripe.

**Diet:** Insects and small seeds.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, pastures, old fields, and occasionally crop fields.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Sometimes unrelated adults and juveniles will help with brood-rearing of nests.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*)

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**Identification:** 5" - Small and inconspicuous. Olive on face. Rufous on wings and back. Black streaks on breast and flanks.

**Diet:** Insects, mostly grasshoppers and beetles.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, old fields, and open-pine woodlands.

**Seasons:** Fall through spring.

**Interesting Fact:** Tends to run along the ground, rather than fly, when threatened.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)

---

**Identification:** 6.75" - Relatively large bill. Males mostly blue and females mostly rich brown. Both sexes with rufous wing bars.

**Diet:** Insects and seeds.

**Habitat:** Early-successional habitats such as brushy pastures, old fields, forest edges, hedgerows, and open-pine woodlands.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Range has recently expanded northward, possibly due to forest clearing.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)

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**Identification:** 5.5” - Males entirely bright blue. Females brown with faint brown streaking.

**Diet:** Small insects, spiders, seeds, buds, and berries.

**Habitat:** Brushy areas, old fields, forest edges and openings.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Like most blue birds, feathers lack blue pigment. Color comes from refraction and reflection of blue light.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)

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**Identification:** 5.5” - Beautiful and colorful. Male has blue head, red breast, and green back. Young males and females olive-green.

**Diet:** Seeds and insects.

**Habitat:** Shrubby areas, thickets, and old fields.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Colorful plumage has led to issues with caged bird trade, outlawed in the U.S. in the early 20th century but remains legal in other countries.



Photo by Scott Somershoe

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## Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*)

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**Identification:** 6.25” - Dark wings, rufous shoulders, white throat, and yellow breast. Male with black V on upper chest. Females duller than males.

**Diet:** Seeds and insects.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, hayfields, pastures, and roadsides.

**Seasons:** Spring through fall.

**Interesting Fact:** Named for its song that sounds like “dick-ciss-el.”





Photo by Ed Schneider

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## Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*)

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**Identification:** 9.5” - Streaked brown on back, yellow breast with a large black V, and white outer-tail feathers (visible in flight).

**Diet:** Insects and seeds.

**Habitat:** Grasslands and grassy patches in agricultural landscapes.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Male often has two female mates at same time.



Photo by James Hurt

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## Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*)

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**Identification:** 7.5" - Small sized. Male is glossy black with a brown head and neck. Female is gray-brown overall.

**Diet:** Insects and seeds.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, woodland edges, thickets, pastures, and residential areas. Often forage near grazing animals and at backyard feeders.

**Seasons:** Year-round.

**Interesting Fact:** Does not build own nest, instead laying eggs in nests of other birds and letting host parents raise young, often at expense of the host's own young.

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