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# eBird

**Discover a new world of birding**

A project from the The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

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The**Cornell**Lab 

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[HTTPS://EBIRD.ORG/HOME](https://eBird.org/home)

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## Introduction

eBird is a big place with lots to explore! It is the world's largest biodiversity-related citizen science project, with more than 100 million bird sightings contributed each year by citizens around the world! The Cornell Lab of Ornithology manages eBird (<https://ebird.org/home>) in collaboration with partner organizations, regional experts, and users. eBird harnesses the power of bird watchers all over the world to document where birds are and when they are using different habitats. With eBird's simple online tools and free app, you can become a part of a larger community of people helping scientists and birds!



**Merlin Bird ID App is free and easy to use!**

## You've Got This

Bird identification can be tricky, but don't worry! No matter where you are, there are tools to help you. In a growing number of countries, the Merlin Bird ID app is often the best way to get started identifying birds. Merlin uses real-time sightings from eBird to quickly narrow your options to species you are most likely to find at that place and time of year. Join us as we explore the Merlin Bird ID app which can help you accurately and confidently identify birds.

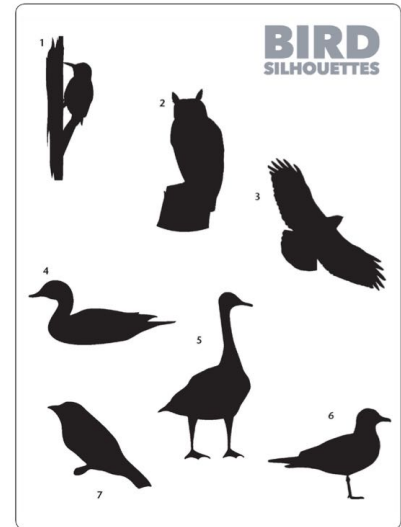
Merlin is a great start to bird identification. However it is always good to consult multiple sources, especially when making an identification for a species that eBird considers "rare." Almost every region has a high quality field guide; the best way to find the local field guide is usually just an online search for the country and "field guide to birds." When making an identification, both from Merlin and from a field guide, pay attention not just to field marks, but also the range, seasonality, behavior, and habitat.

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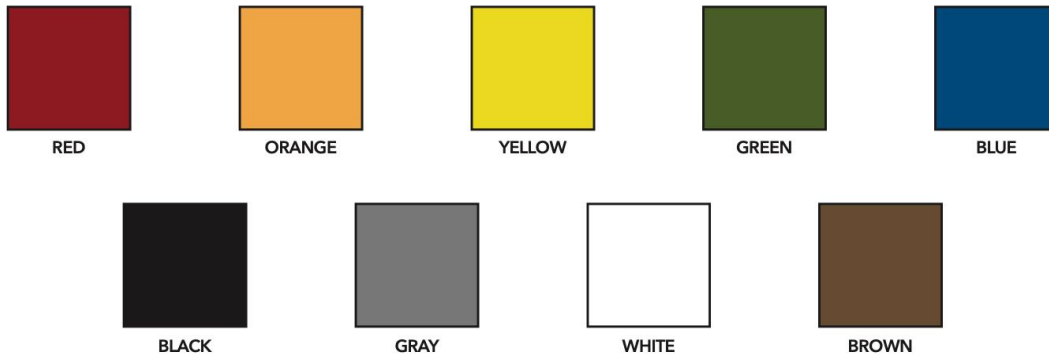
## Bird ID Basics (Merlin App will help!!)

When you first spot a bird, it can be tempting to go right to your field guide or app to try to identify it, but by doing this we often miss key information that can help with identification. Instead, encourage your students to spend time observing a bird and looking for the four keys to identification: size and shape, color pattern, behavior, and habitat.

**Size and shape:** It's tempting to start with color, but bird ID experts begin by observing the general size and shape of a bird. This helps put the bird into the right group or family of birds. This may sound hard to do, but you already know more than you think. Was the bird you saw a duck? A songbird? Compare your mystery bird to the birds you know. Is it smaller than a goose? Larger than a crow? Pay particular attention to the length of the tail and the length and shape of the beak.



**Color Pattern:** Pay attention to the overall color pattern by taking a color inventory of the bird. What color is on the head? Body? Tail? Where is there spotting or streaking? Look for those patterns and features that really stand out. Among birds that are similarly colored, the color patterns on the head and wings are often important for identification.



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**Behavior:** How a bird acts can be a great clue for identification. Being a careful observer of bird behavior can help you take your bird identification to the next level. How is the bird sitting, eating, or flying? For example, when looking at the bird's posture, note if the bird is upright or horizontal. These traits can help you decide between similar species. Another behavior to look for is repeated movements, like a bird bobbing its head or tail.

## Why Citizen Science?

Kids and adults all over the world are following basic scientific protocols and submitting their observations to databases that scientists use to answer real-world questions. From stars to flowers, and bugs to birds, citizen science is people-powered science that helps us connect to and understand our world.

Through these diverse projects, students become scientists—making careful observations, following protocols, and collecting data, while supporting researchers across the world. You'll find participating in real science is deeply engaging and exciting for your students. In addition, amid growing concern about the health of children and their access to nature, citizen science gets children outside, learning to appreciate their local environment.

Finally, citizen science helps educators seamlessly meet the Next Generation Science Standards' (NGSS) goal of having students experience the science process first hand. Both NGSS and citizen science encourage the development of science literacy through discovery, exploration, and real-world connections. To learn more about how citizen science meets NGSS performance standards, visit the resource website for this guide ([birdsleuth.org/ebird-essentials](https://birdsleuth.org/ebird-essentials)).

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## No Smartphone? No Problem!

### Become a Bird ID Expert

#### Sketch Your Focus Bird

In the space below, write the common and scientific names of your focus bird.  
Sketch the bird and label at least three field marks that are useful in its identification.

Common Name \_\_\_\_\_

Scientific Name \_\_\_\_\_

Sketch

When sketching your bird, consider the following:

Is the **tail** long or short compared to the body?

Are the **legs** long or short compared to the body?

What is the shape of the **beak**?

# BIRD COUNT TALLY SHEET

## OBSERVATION INFORMATION—HOW AND WHEN DID YOU BIRD?

1. Location \_\_\_\_\_
2. Count Protocol (check one)     Incidental     Stationary     Traveling
3. Observation date \_\_\_\_\_ Start time \_\_\_\_\_ AM / PM    End time \_\_\_\_\_ AM / PM
4. Number of people in group \_\_\_\_\_ Distance traveled \_\_\_\_\_

## CHECKLIST INFORMATION—WHAT DID YOU SEE?

Are you reporting all the species you identified? (check one)     YES     NO

SPECIES	TOTAL # OF INDIVIDUALS	NOTES