

What's That Bird?

Birds are living dinosaurs! Over 10,000 species live across the planet today! The Front Range of Colorado has many beautiful and interesting natives (and visitors) to watch with a pair of binoculars, but have you ever wondered how to identify the birds that live around your neighborhood? Here's a fun activity you can do from your window, in your backyard, or if you're out on a hike!

What You'll Need:

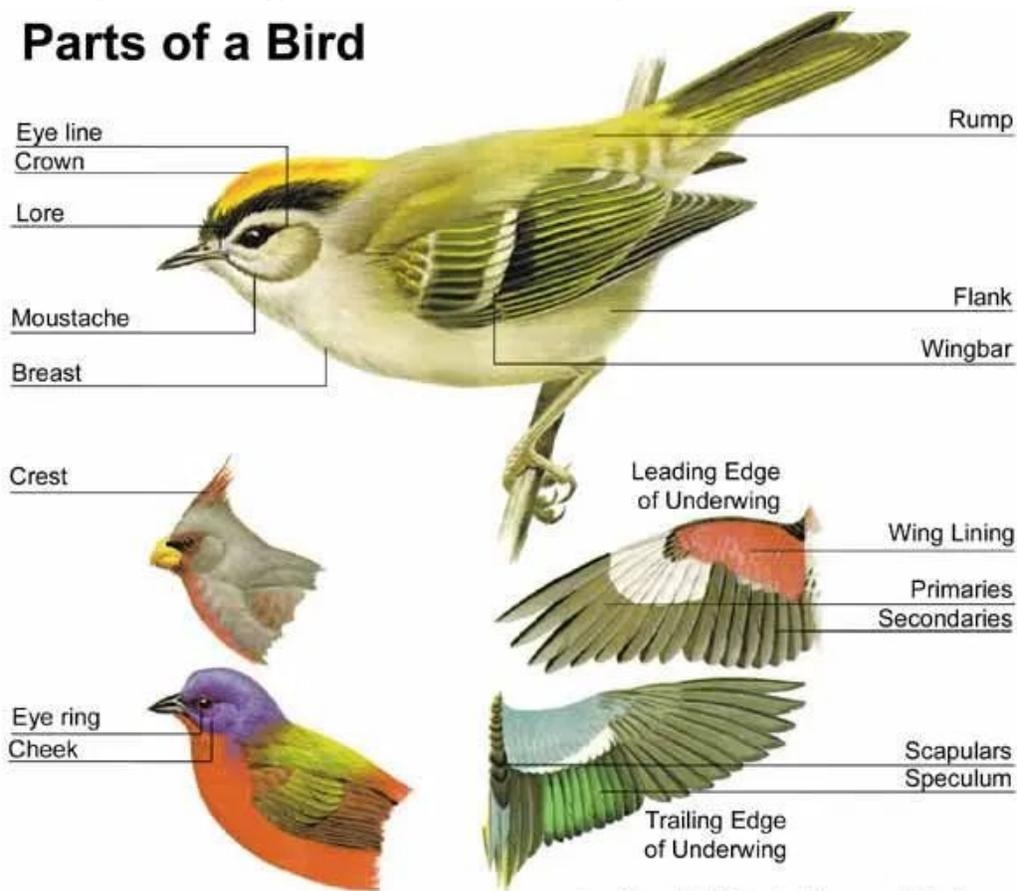
- Binoculars
- A few blank pieces of paper to sketch birds you see (and label their field marks)
- Clipboard
- Pencil

Directions:

Birds are often identified visually by noticing a striking mark or colored feature, or even the pattern of their flight or the shape they make when they fly. Over 300 bird species have been observed across Colorado's Front Range, hopefully today we'll spot a few of them!

From: <https://ornithology.com/bird-external-anatomy/>

Parts of a Bird



Original Art by John P. O'neil

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Nongame and Urban Program
Reproduced by permission of the National Geographic Society

Examples of local Colorado Front Range Birds):

1. Western Scrub Jay: A local bird in this area, they are blue like other jays. This is the first and best indicator. They also have a longer tail and are often seen in shrub and low-lying trees, or near the ground. (<https://bit.ly/2vC5bA0>)
2. Crow/Raven: Big black birds; commonly seen around Dinosaur Ridge. Ravens are larger than crows, have a bigger beak, and a rounded tail (compared to a square tail on a crow). (Raven: <https://bit.ly/2WDex9E>) (Crow: <https://bit.ly/2vDog4Z>)
3. Red-Tailed Hawk: This is a very common raptor (bird of prey) in this area, and is often noticed by their brick-red tail. However, they don't get that red color until they're about 5-years old, meaning you need to also look at the markings on their wings: the comma-line on the wrist and forearm respectively. (Tail coloration: <https://bit.ly/2Qy8Oy2>)
 - a. (Underwing Pattern - wrist commas and arm dashes:)



4. Swainson's Hawk: A summer visitor to Dinosaur Ridge, this raptor is easy to spot because of the underside of the wings: black in the back, white in the front. If they're not flying, you can easily identify them by the "hood" of darker colored feather that covers the whole head and down the chest to its tummy. (<https://bit.ly/2WunPog>)
5. Red-breasted Robin: A bouncy, singing bird with a big identifying red chest. (<https://bit.ly/3a404HQ>)
6. Turkey Vulture: Not a raptor but a meat-eating bird. These big birds are often seen gliding through the area in summer, and they are identifiable by the wings: grey in the back black at the front. They are also easy to spot as they glide for they tend to "wobble" to correct their flight rather than adjust their wings, and they hold their wings higher in a "V" rather than a hawk or eagle. If you see them up close enough they have a featherless red-skinned head and neck. (<https://bit.ly/3dhSz2c>)

7. Black-billed Magpie: A corvid, related to crows and ravens, they identified clearly by their black and white feathers. They also have a long balancing tail and are often found low to the ground or in shrubs or short trees. (<https://bit.ly/3a8DMVI>)
8. Northern Flicker: This is a woodpecker, and is often noticed by the black lines around the beak and throat, black speckled spots on their chest and stomach, and orange tail and wing feathers. (<https://bit.ly/33zDJiP>)
9. Rufous Hummingbird: Beautiful little hummingbird you may HEAR instead of SEE. They made a whistling/buzzing sound when they fly (quickly). They are identified by their beautiful orange feathers, rufous meaning rusty. (<https://bit.ly/39aDvQq>)
10. Black-capped Chickadee: Tiny, round little birds. Males are easy to spot with their “black cap” feathers on their heads, while females are more of a brown capped color. (<https://bit.ly/33BbUa2>)

Here is a great link to Colorado’s birds: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_birds_of_Colorado so you can look for more friends in your neighborhood!