

Missouri is a great state for birdwatching (also called birding). Of the approximately 900 bird species in North America, more than 400 have been recorded in Missouri, and more than 150 species regularly nest here.

Birding is fun no matter the season, and there's no better place to get started than right outside your window. Follow these pointers and you'll be a better birder in no time.

How To

Become a Better Birder



SHAPE

Pay close attention to a bird's shape in flight. **Barn swallows** have sharply angled wings and a forked tail. Many other birds, such as geese and turkey vultures, have distinctive shapes in flight, too.

SIZE

Some birds, like Canada geese, have immense wingspans. Other birds could easily fit in the palm of your hand. Gauging their size will help narrow your ID.

Generally, hawks and other birds of prey are much larger than birds commonly seen at birdfeeders, such as chickadees, sparrows, and robins.



From left: **Black-capped chickadee**, 5½ inches; **Rock pigeon**, 12½ inches; **American crow**, 17½ inches; **Canada goose**, 48 inches

COLOR

Many birds' feathers (called plumage) vary throughout the year, but look for colors that jump out the most.

Eastern bluebirds are easy to spot with their bright blue head cap and wings, and reddish chest.



Start out by learning Missouri's common birds, such as robins, crows, cardinals, Canada geese, blue jays, and pigeons. Others, such as the downy woodpecker and great blue heron, have distinctive colors and shapes you'll soon know by heart.



White-breasted nuthatch

Ready to learn more?

The Conservation Department offers free publications to get you started. Request a copy of **Feeding Backyard Birds** and **Enjoying Missouri's Birds** by emailing pubstaff@mdc.mo.gov.