

# TRAILBLAZERS



## TBC CAMPER GUIDE to MASHIPACONG BIRDS

© Trail Blazer Camps, June, 2021



## INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This *TBC Camper Guide to Mashipacong Birds* was created for Trail Blazer Camps (TBC) by a group of TBC alumni to share their knowledge with current staff and campers about some of the birds commonly found at TBC's Mashipacong property and other sites where TBC operates its outdoor education programs.

The conceptual design, selection of birds, format, and text of the booklet were created by this alumni group on behalf of Trail Blazer Camps. Except for the photo of the Common Yellowthroat feeding a Cowbird (p. 10), the bird photos were downloaded from *iStock by Getty Images* (<https://www.istockphoto.com/>) and are included in the booklet with permission under standard licenses obtained by Trail Blazer Camps from *iStock by Getty Images*. The photo of the Common Yellowthroat feeding Cowbird was downloaded from Wikipedia Creative Commons, and is included under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

Copyright to this booklet is held by Trail Blazer Camps. However, *iStock by Getty Images* retains unaltered copyright ownership of its photographs. Therefore, the booklet, in whole or in part, cannot be reproduced without permission from Trail Blazer Camps. In addition, individual *iStock* photographs cannot be extracted from the booklet for other uses without permission from *iStock*. For additional information on *iStock* license agreements, see: <https://www.istockphoto.com/legal/license-agreement>.

As is the case for most things at Trail Blazers, this booklet is the product of a group effort. Alumni (in alphabetical order) who contributed text descriptions for individual birds included: Debra Dolph, Diane Schaefer Mark Siegeltuch,

Jeffrey Wedge, and Deborah Willis. TBC and the AEC wish to especially recognize and thank Diane Schaefer for developing the conceptual framework for the booklet and her primary authorship of most of the bird descriptions and Juanita Barena for collecting photographs, collecting, formatting and editing contributions to the manuscript and publishing the final document. TBC also wishes to thank all the great nature loving photographers who submitted their photographs to *iStock* and Creative Commons, thereby making them available for others to see and share. The names of the photographers as they appear on *iStock* or Creative Commons are given in the photo credit below each photograph.

Although there are many more bird species at Mashipacong and TBC's other outdoor education sites than the ones described in this booklet, the alumni group has selected a subset of birds whose songs, appearance or behavioral characteristics make them more accessible to identification by novice birders. In addition, this booklet is intended to accompany a separate booklet for leaders (also created by alumni), titled *Taking your Campers on a Bird Walk at TBC's Mashipacong Estate*, which identifies specific locations at Mashipacong where the birds included in this booklet are commonly heard or seen. And, of course, the alumni contributors believe that campers and staff will find these birds as interesting and exciting as they did during their years at Trail Blazer Camps.

## ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF BIRDS

	Page
American Goldfinch	1-2
American Robin	3
Baltimore Oriole	4
Barn Swallow	5
Barred Owl	6
Black-capped Chickadee	7
Bluebird	8
Brown-headed Cowbird	9-10
Chipping Sparrow	11
Common Yellowthroat	12
Eastern (Rufous-sided) Towhee	13-14
Flicker (Yellow-shafted)	15
Gray Catbird	16-17
Hermit Thrush	18-19
House Wren	20
Mourning Dove	21
Ovenbird	22
Phoebe	23
Pileated Woodpecker	24-25
Red-winged Blackbird	26
Song Sparrow	27
Tufted Titmouse	28-29
Veery Thrush	30-31
Wood Thrush	32
Yellow Warbler	33

## American Goldfinch



Photo credit: iStock.com/ Brian Lasenby

**Size:** 4-5 inches. These bright yellow and black birds are the state bird of New Jersey. The females are not so bright. They are a duller yellow beneath and more olive colored on the back.

Goldfinches are strict vegetarians, eating mainly seeds and plants. They love to eat thistle plants. Because of this, Goldfinches are usually found in weedy fields and floodplains, where plants such as thistles and asters are common. They are also found in cultivated areas, roadsides, orchards, and backyards. A good place to go to see a Goldfinch at Camp is the grassy area by the Lodge, where you can look out into the old donkey pen field.

Goldfinches nest later than most birds. They wait until the milkweed and thistle plants have produced their seeds. They use these to build their nests and then the babies can eat the seeds when they are hungry.

The Goldfinch will sing when it flies. Its high-pitched flight call sounds like they are saying “*po-ta-to chip*.” They fly in a rolling pattern, like a roller coaster. So, at Camp, we sometimes call them the “*Roller Coaster Bird*.” In fact, a Trail Blazer counselor named Barbara Beitzel wrote a song about the special way that the Goldfinch flies and sings. And, here are the lyrics to the song.

Oh, see him fly  
Against the sky  
A yellow roller coaster.  
The Goldfinch sings  
With open wings  
His notes come tumbling after



Illustration credit: iStock.com/Eloku

## American Robin



Photo credit: iStock.com/ DB Beyer

Size: 7-11 inches. The Robin is in the thrush family. It has an orange breast with dark feathers on their back. The female birds are not as bright. They sing in short phrases from the top of trees. Sometimes they seem to chuckle at their own jokes. They are common in yards, parks and the woods. They seem to cock their head to hear the worms digging. Then they will give a hop and pull up a worm for their meal

They can raise up to 3 broods of babies each summer. Only about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the baby robins survive through the fall. If they make it to the fall, many live 10 - 14 years.

In the summer, the female robins sleep in their nests. The males sleep together in a "roost" at the top of the trees.



## Baltimore Oriole



Photo credit: iStock.com/ PaulReevesPhotography

Size: 9 inches. The male Oriole is bright orange with a black head and shoulders and black wings with white bars. They can be found in woodland areas in the tops of trees. The Oriole song is sometimes described as “flute like” because of how clear it sounds. The song is usually made up of a series of 5-7 paired notes, although when they are trying to drive other birds away, they make a chattering sound. Listen for their flute-like song and look for a bright orange color at the tops of trees in the spring.



Orioles make a very strong nest shaped like a long basket that hangs from branches. Orioles eat caterpillars but also have a sweet tooth, flying down to eat berries and nectar from flowers.

Nest Photo credit: iStock.com/  
PaulReevesPhotography

## Barn Swallow



Photo credit: iStock.com/ Drakuliren

Size: 6-7 inches. The Barn Swallow has a shiny blue back and a coppery cinnamon color its under neck and chest. The most noticeable characteristic is its forked tail in flight. It is often seen perched on wires or fences or darting through the air, turning and diving or flying high to catch insects.

It is an adaptable bird and is found in much of the northern hemisphere for breeding while wintering in the southern hemisphere. The barn swallow can be seen in a variety of open habitats such as fields, around ponds and marshes, the edges of roads, parks, and meadows, or other areas where flying insects are plentiful. Originally, they nested in caves but now also use buildings. Parent birds often get help feeding their young from previously hatched siblings and sometimes unrelated juveniles.

## Barred Owl



Photo credit: iStock.com/ Mason Maron

**Size:** 17- 24 inches. The Barred Owl is a large grey-brown owl that lives in the woodlands. It is mostly active at night, but it can be found roosting in trees during the daytime. Unlike many other owls, it has no tufts (which look like ears), which is one way to identify it. Also, while most owls have yellow eyes, the Barred Owl has large brown eyes.

The Barred Owl gets its name from the brown and white pattern barred across the neck and streaked from top to bottom on its stomach.

The Barred Owl is sometimes called the “laughing Owl” because of the many different sounds that it makes. Its call sounds like: Hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-aw. and is repeated four times, and some people say that it sounds like: “Who, Who, Who cooks for you?”

## Black-capped Chickadee



Photo credit: iStock.com/ michaelmill

Size: 4.5 - 6 inches. The Chickadee is a busy bird, flying here and there. It is white and grey with a black cap and chin. They have two common songs. One song is a sad sounding, high-pitched, peeeee- weeee. The other song is more chipper. They will sing their name: chick-a-dee-dee-dee! When there is a threat to the birds, they will use the *chick-a-dee-dee* song to warn of the threat. The more "dee's" in the song, the greater the threat.

Chickadees are found just about anywhere. They like to nest in holes found in trees.

These birds like to hide seeds and nuts to eat later. Each item is placed in a different spot. The Chickadee can remember thousands of hiding places.

## Bluebird



Photo credit: iStock.com/Paul Reeves Photography

**Size:** 6-8 inches. This exciting bird is all blue on its back with an orange-red breast and white belly. The male is much brighter blue than the female. Bluebirds are in the thrush family. Bluebirds sing a low-pitched, warbling song made up of several phrases, each consisting of 1-3 short notes. Its most common call is a soft, low-pitched “*tu-a-wee*” that is rapidly repeated.

You might spot them sitting on a fence post. It catches insects. It will dart from the fence to catch the bug and then back to the fence.

The male Bluebird will find a hole in a tree or a bird box. They will flap their wings and go in and out of the box to attract a female. After they have found a female, she does the rest of the nest building and incubating the eggs. They often have more than one brood of babies in a year.

## Brown-headed Cowbird



Photo credit: iStock.com/Warren\_Price

Size: 6- 8 inches. The male Cowbird is black with a glossy brown head, the female is a plain gray. Just because the bird is called a Cowbird, don't expect it to sound like a cow. Instead, the bird's calls include a squeaky gurgle, a rattle, or a "check" sound.

The brown-headed cowbird and the bronzed cowbird (found in the American Southwest and as far south as Central America) are the only North American songbirds classifiable as "*brood parasites*." This means they lay their eggs in the nests of other birds, leaving the eggs and care for the hatchlings to the foster parents. Cowbirds lay 4 or 5 white eggs lightly speckled with brown, but lay them one egg at a time (in different nests). Cowbirds have been noted to use the nests of over 200 other species. most of them physically smaller than the cowbird. Some host species eject the egg from the nest, some lay a new nest lining over the cowbird egg. However, most host birds rear the young cowbird. The youngster grows quickly and at the expense of the host bird's young, taking most of the food

and even pushing other young birds out of the nest. Just imagine being an adult 4-5" Common Yellowthroat mom (pictured below on the right) having to feed a baby cowbird (on the left) that is already bigger than you are.



Photo credit: By Agathman - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=72818668>

It has been suggested that the cowbird's parasitic behavior developed because the birds followed the bison herds and had no time for building nests and tending the young until they could manage on their own. Although this is a neat theory, it is clearly speculation. However, it is a fact that cowbirds do ride on the backs of bison, as well as cows and other livestock, waiting for them to kick up grasshoppers and other insects for them to eat.



## Chipping Sparrow



Photo credit: iStock.com/MattCuda

**Size:** 5-7 inches. The Chipping Sparrow is a slender bird with a long tail. It has a rusty cap and a black stripe by the eye. It is mostly brownish on top and white-gray underneath.

Chipping Sparrows feed on the ground but will hide in bushes by the side of the road or trail, and they will often sing from their perches in the bushes.” Their songs are about 3.5 seconds long, consisting of about 55 nearly identical *chips* in a row. They sound like a sewing machine, so we like to call this bird a “sewing machine bird. They are found on the edge of the woods, in parks, and in the lawns and grasses.

The oldest known chipping sparrow was ~11 years old.



## Common Yellowthroat



Photo credit: iStock/mirceax

Size: 4 - 5 inches. This is a small “warbler” found near water. The term “warbler” refers several different groups (families) of small birds with great singing voices. The Common Yellowthroat has a loud song that sounds like, “*witchety, witchety, witchety.*”

In the Americas, warblers are also usually very brightly colored, as compared to warblers in other parts of the world. The Common Yellowthroat likes to flit around in the bushes in front of the Big Dipper. They are looking for little insects and spiders. If you’re lucky it will settle down long enough for you to catch a glimpse of its bright yellow throat and black mask. You might want to remember it as the “robber bird,” The females do not have the black mask, and the male’s mask is important since females appear to prefer to mate with males with larger masks.

## Eastern (Rufous-sided) Towhee



Photo credit: iStock/Troy Levengood

Size: 7-9 1/2 inches. As is common among birds, the male is much more decorative. He has a shiny black head and back and a white belly, separated by a rust-colored side. The technical term for this color is "rufous," which is described as a "strong orange." Because of this color, the bird used to be named the Rufous-sided Towhee.



The female is usually slightly smaller and a drab brown where the male is black.

Photo credit: iStock/chas53

The Towhee has a nest looking like a loose cup of bark, weed stems, or grass, hidden on or near the ground in quite dense cover. Normally the female lays 4-6 eggs that are white with red-brown spots.

Although the Towhee is considered a perching bird, the Towhee actually spends much of its time on the ground foraging for food and can be quite noisy (almost as raucous as a chipmunk) scratching among the leaves.

The Towhee's song is generally *drink-your-TEA* with the second syllable lower than the first and the third both higher and accented. As a call, the bird sings a clear *to-  
whew?* with the second syllable a rising tone as if it is a question. The bird will also chirp a *chewink*. The name of the Towhee is an imitation of the bird's call,

There is a fun song about the Towhee's song that we often sing at Camp. The human song was written by a Trail Blazer counselor named Barbara Beitzel. The melody of the song includes some of the actual musical notes of the Towhee's song, and the lyrics are:

*Drink your tea*

*Said the little bird*

*So, I drank my tea right away.*

*It was cold and sweet*

*And, so very very good*

*That I thanked him for reminding me*

*Towhee!*

## Flicker (Yellow Shafted)



Photo credit: iStock/Mirceax

Size: 12-14 inches. The Yellow-Shafted Flicker is a member of the woodpecker family. Unlike other woodpeckers, it has a brown back and a black crescent on its neck. The male has a black mustache and a patch of red on the back of its head. The female has a red mustache.

The Flicker is a large, active bird with a noticeable white rump which is visible when it flies. When flying overhead, it shows golden yellow under its wings. It has an up and down flight pattern like ocean waves. You may see it hopping along the ground looking for ants which are one of its favorite foods. The Flicker's call is a loud *wick-wick-wick* or a squeaky *flick-a, flick-a* from which it gets its name. You can also tell that a Flicker is nearby by listening for the sound of its "drumming" on a tree with its long hard beak. Flicker drumming lasts about 1 second, during which the bird strikes the tree about 25 times.

## Gray Catbird



Photo credit: iStock/passion4nature

Size: 8-9 1/4 inches. This bird is usually known simply as a catbird, but the official name includes the color to distinguish it from the "Black Catbird" from southern Mexico, which is very unlikely to be found at Camp. This bird is slender and dark gray with a black cap and a black tail with orange markings underneath. It has a variety of songs, including a long, irregular succession of musical notes and phrases and a cat-like mewing. At times it seems to mimic other birds' songs. Often the bird announces its presence with a cat-like whine from a dense tangle of brush. It will often respond to your imitation of this call, popping out for a better look.

While the Catbird generally nests in a dense bush or tangle of vines, it can also be found in residential areas and gardens. These locations are places where the bird can find its favorite food --- insects. This makes the catbird quite welcome in gardens and around places where people live as it helps control some pests. A good place to look for

the Catbird is the grassy area by the Lodge, where you can look out into the old donkey pen field.

The Catbird's nest looks like a bulky mass of twigs, stems, and leaves lined with finer plant material and concealed in a tangle of vines or a dense bush. The bird lays 4 or 5 glossy blue-green eggs. Fortunately, the Catbird Mom can identify her own eggs since Cowbirds will often lay a single speckled white egg in Catbird nests, expecting that the Catbird will incubate and feed the baby Cowbird. But, instead, the Catbird will throw the egg out of the nest.



Photo credit: iStock/LARISA SHPINEVA



## Hermit Thrush



Photo credit: iStock/Paul Reeves Photography

**Size:** 7 inches. The Hermit Thrush is one of several members of a family of birds known as thrushes. The thrushes have large eyes and slender bills. Although some thrushes like the Robin and the Bluebird are very colorful and can be found in open spaces, many thrushes, like the Hermit Thrush, the Veery Thrush, and the Wood Thrush, have dull brown backs and spotted chests and live deep in the woods. But, what this group of thrushes lack in color is more than made up for by their lovely flute-like songs.

The song of the male Hermit Thrush has been described as "the finest sound in nature." It consists of a beginning note, then several descending musical phrases in a minor key, repeated at different pitches. The song begins with a whistle and ends with softer, echo-like tones, described as *oh, holy holy, ah, purity purity eeh, sweetly sweetly*. Each male has seven to thirteen different ways of singing its song, and never sings the same song type twice in a row. Also, different male birds have a different set of ways to sing their song.

Like other songbirds, hermit thrushes (both males and females) also use a variety of sounds called “calls” that have different meanings. Some of these sound like a low *chuck* or *scolding tuk-tuk-tuk*.

The Hermit Thrush is most easily identified by its reddish-brown tail. It has numerous black spots on its chest but not as many as the Wood Thrush. When it perches, it has a habit of cocking its tail and then dropping it slowly while flicking its wings.

Hermit Thrushes are often found hopping on the forest floor among the leaves looking for food. They can also be found walking in a forest clearing or on a trail. After the female makes her nest (with no help from her male partner), the male gathers much of the food for the female and babies while the female thrush stays at the nest.

Although hermit thrushes are at Mashipacong in the spring, summer, and early fall, they spend their winter in the warmer weather of the south.



## House Wren



Photo credit: iStock/Paul Reeves Photography

**Size:** ~ 4 inches. This plain brown bird only weighs as much as 2 quarters, but it has a great big bubbly voice. You might want to call it the “music box bird” because it seems like the many notes of its song are being shaken from a music box. When it sings, its tail often stands straight up in the air.

The House Wren is a feisty little bird. It will poke holes in other bird eggs so there is less competition for bugs and food. The House Wren will make a nest any kind of cavity, including natural hollows in trees and stumps, old woodpecker holes, crevices in buildings, and in nest boxes. This little bird raises about 3 broods of babies. Sometimes mites get in the nests and bother the babies. To help with this, the parents add spider eggs to the nest. When the spiders hatch, they eat the mites and help keep the babies healthy!

## Mourning Dove



Photo credit: iStock/ Donyanedomam

**Size:** 9-13 inches. The Mourning Dove is a common bird found all over the United States. It is often seen perched on telephone wires. They are brownish gray above with large black spots on their wings. They are peach colored below and have pink legs and a black bill.

You should note that the first part of the bird's name is spelled "m o u r n i n g," which means feeling very sad, usually about someone who has died. It gets this name because it has a soft, sad sounding call.

The Mourning Dove likes to forage for seeds on the ground. It will busily feed on the seeds filling a spot in its esophagus with thousands of seeds. Once it is full, they fly off to a safe perch to digest the seeds.

The oldest known Mourning Dove was **30 years old!**

## Ovenbird



Photo credit: iStock/passion4nature

Size: ~6 inches. The Ovenbird has an olive-brown head, back, and wings, with a white belly marked with dark interrupted streaks, a yellow ring around its eyes, and an orange-brown crown with black stripes on its head. The bird's legs are pinkish.

The Ovenbird prefers open forest without undergrowth. The bird is named for its nest, which looks like a small Dutch oven. The nest looks like a dome of dead leaves lined with grass and is generally found on the ground, with a side entrance. The nest usually has 4 or 5 brown-spotted eggs.

The Ovenbird has a loud, staccato song, singing *teacher, teacher, teacher*. In flight the song is a bubbling, exuberant series of notes ending with *teacher, teacher*. This song can often be heard at night.

## Phoebe



Photo credit: iStock/passion4nature

Size: 5.5-7 inches. These birds are brownish gray above and white below with a black beak. They will perch on lower branches and make short, darting flights out to catch a bug and then return to their perch. They will eat wasps, ticks, spiders and many other insects.

You might think of the Phoebe as the “scolding bird.” Its song sounds like it is shouting “*phoebe, phoebe*” at some little bird named Phoebe that got into trouble ... maybe they didn’t do their chores.

They breed in wooded areas often near water. They are often found near buildings or bridges. They will build their nest under the roof eaves. The female builds the nest usually out of mud and grasses. The Phoebe will reuse nests from year to year. They like to keep to themselves.

## Pileated Woodpecker



Photo credit: iStock/Warren\_Price

**Size:** 16-18 inches. The Pileated Woodpecker is a large forest bird close to the size of a crow (16-19 inches long). The bird is mostly black with white stripes on its neck and a bright red crest that continues behind the head to a point. In flight the underwings have large patches of white.

This woodpecker can be found throughout eastern north America into Canada and west along the Pacific Northwest. They are most common in mature deciduous forests or mixed forests with evergreens.

Pileated Woodpeckers drill large rectangular holes in dead trees, stumps or downed logs to find carpenter ants, their favorite food. They will also eat other insects, larvae, and wild berries. The holes can be up to a foot long and deep.

They also drill cavities in trees for nesting. At times, the holes they drill can be so large and deep that a smaller tree will break in half. The male begins building the nesting cavity, which can be 10-24 inches deep and the female



helps as it nears finishing. The cavity takes 3-6 weeks to build and is lined just with wood chips.

Their nesting hole is generally only used for one year by the woodpeckers, although other birds or animals may use it later. The pair will stay in its territory all year and defend it, but they may allow guests in winter. They drum with their long chisel like beak to stake out their territory preferring to use hollow logs for better sound. This display drumming can occur at a rate of 11-30 taps in less than a second.



Photo credit: iStock/  
Petrovvai



Photo credit: iStock/  
Harry\_ Collins

## Red-winged Blackbird



Photo credit: iStock/Derwyn

Size: 7-9 inches. You can't miss the male Red-winged Blackbird. They are very black with bright red shoulder patches. They look like a general in the army. These birds like to sit on top of cattails and other plants singing away. Their song is a loud, "OHHH Kleeeee" or some say "Conk-la-reeee." The female birds are mostly brownish overall and are shyer.

They can be found by lakes, water ditches in roads... just about anywhere with water.

The male birds spend much of their day during breeding season protecting their territory. They will chase other birds away, but they also have been seen chasing after horses and people. The oldest red-winged blackbird was almost 16 years old.

## Song Sparrow



Photo credit:PaulReevesPhotography

Size: 5-7 inches. The Song Sparrow is mostly brown, white and grey. Its breast is streaked brown and white with a central brown dot in the middle of the breast.

They like to sing from the top of tall bushes. They can be found in open grassy areas, down by the lake and even along the road. Their song sounds like “*drip, drip, drip, trill.*” Male song sparrows attract a mate by having longer, more complicated songs. The females seem to like that.

Song Sparrows nest on the ground in clumps of grass or up in the bushes. Their nest is a sturdy cup of loose grass, weeds and bark on the outside and then lined with grasses and animal hair. The finished nest is 4 - 8 inches across. Wouldn't it be fun to find one?



## Tufted Titmouse



Photo credit: Brian E. Kushner

Size:~ 6 inches. Titmice are small birds that live in woodlands and flit from tree branch to tree branch, sometimes even hanging upside down from a branch. They have a gray upper body with a crest on top of their heads, and a white fluffy breast. They have big black eyes and rusty sides (flanks), and the adults have a black spot right above their beaks. Titmice are present all year round so you can see them in the winter too.

Titmice have a very distinctive song that you will probably hear before you see them that sounds like they are saying *Peter-Peter-Peter* in bursts of three, over and over. Titmice build nests inside of old woodpecker holes and line them with hair they find from animals (including humans) that are stuck to bushes and tree trunks caught as an animal runs by (or when you brush your hair outside!). Although they will not try this on humans, they have been known to steal hair right from an animal!

An easy way to remember things about the Tufted Titmouse is to learn to sing a song that was written about this bird by TBC counselor Barbara Beitzel. The song talks about the bird's characteristics and includes the words and notes of the actual bird's song. The lyrics are:

On our way, on our vagabond today.  
When we stopped to eat our food,  
We found him in a gay old mood.  
Peter, Peter, Peter, came the call  
Of the tufted Titmouse, oh, so small  
Peter, Peter, Peter, loud he said  
With a crest upon his head



Photo credit: iStock/SteveByland

## Veery Thrush



Photo credit: iStock/Paul ReevesPhotography

Size: 6.5-7.5 inches. The Veery has a soft brown color without any redness. Unlike the Hermit Thrush and Wood Thrush, it has only a few spots on its chest. It is often found hopping on the forest floor among the leaves looking for food. It likes to build its nest in wetter areas.

If there were a contest for the best thrush singer, the Veery would be the Hermit Thrush's best competitor. In fact, some people would say that the Veery is the better singer because it harmonizes with itself. The male Veery song is a series of variations on sounds that sound like the word "veer" (which is how the bird got its name). The "veer" sounds descend slightly in pitch and resonates as if whirling around inside a metal pipe or down a drain.

How do thrushes like the Veery create such fine music? The answer is that they have a "*double*" voice box, unique to them, called the syrinx. So, a thrush like the Veery can voice notes independently and simultaneously from each half of its syrinx, notes which blend as harmonious tones.

Like the Hermit Thrush, the Veery emits a variety of whistled, squealed, and chattering calls. The most common is a distinctive soft and reedy call that sounds like: “*Vee-ur, veer, veer*, that can make these birds easy to find even when they are not singing.

These birds spend the winters in Central and South Brazil. They fly long distances at night. They alternate flapping their wings with coasting. The veeries are efficient fliers and can cross oceans more easily than other thrushes.

The Veery’s lovely song and the fact that it is often heard at dusk or in the early evening inspired Barbara Beitzel, a Trail Blazer counselor, to write a song about it that includes the notes of the melody of the bird’s song. The lyrics to the song are provided below, and we hope that you will try to learn to sing it.

In the forest deep  
Just before I sleep  
Songs that have no words  
Sung by little birds  
Fill my heart at night  
Fill it with delight  
Every time the Veery sings  
It sings its song, just right.

## Wood Thrush



Photo credit: iStock/Neil Bowman

Size: ~8 inches. The Wood Thrush has a reddish-brown head and back. It has numerous black spots on its chest (way more than the Hermit or Veery thrushes) and has a white eye ring. It is also a bit plumper than the Hermit or Veery thrushes. But, like them, it is often found hopping on the forest floor looking for food.

Like the other thrushes that live in the deep woods, the Wood Thrush has a lovely song. Its song is very flute-like and sounds like *ee-o-lay* or *ee*. Its call sounds like *pip- pip-pip- pip-lo-ee*

These birds need lots of calcium to raise their babies. They eat snail shells to get this calcium. The snail shells are hard to find these days because of acid rain. This explains the decline in the numbers of these thrushes.

## Yellow Warbler



Photo credit: iStock/flammulated

Size: 4.5- 5 inches. This is a beautiful ALL yellow warbler that is often found near water. You may also see it near the garden or lower front lawn of the Great Hall or near the Lodge. If it sits still long enough, you might see some faint red streaks on the male's breast.

They can be seen near the top of tall bushes or trees. They are very busy birds, hopping here and there to catch bugs and caterpillars.

Males sing a series of 6–10 whistled notes that accelerate over the course of the roughly 1-second song and often end on a rising note. The tone is so sweet that people often describe it as *sweet sweet sweet I'm so sweet*.

This warbler will sometimes build nests on top of old nests. Sometimes they will have "six floors" to their nest!



