

Yellow-billed Cuckoo



Latin Name

Coccyzus americanus

Habitat

Forest

Diet

Caterpillars and other insects

Plumage

**Brown on top and white on bottom,
yellow bill**

Egg Color

**Smooth, unmarked, pale bluish-
green fading to light greenish yellow**



You may hear Yellow-billed Cuckoos' steady monotonous coo's more frequently than you may see them. These birds nest high in deciduous forest on steady branches. They mainly feed on caterpillars and other insects. When they're born, this cuckoo's bill may be darker, but as they grow you can always distinguish them by their yellow bill.

Board member Susan Calhoun says "The Yellow-Billed Cuckoo has been my favorite bird since I first heard its call when I first arrived in SE Ohio. The curved beak and geometric-patterned tail feathers, the secretive nature; and best of all, that mysterious call coming from way up high in the canopy. To me this sound signals summer is here and is entwined with my connection to our amazing eastern deciduous forests."

While Cuckoo's can be rare to spot, you never know when you can be in the right place at the right time. While walking along the bike path a few years ago ornithologist and birder Bob Scott Placier witnessed a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in a branch about 25 feet above him. He noticed the bird lower its wings, bring them up, then back and forth in a display he'd never seen before. Female and male Yellow-billed Cuckoos can be challenging to distinguish based on sight. However, when a second Yellow-billed Cuckoo flew to the branch with a juicy caterpillar, Bob realized he was watching a female engage in a mating ritual!

Black-billed Cuckoo



Latin Name

Coccyzus erythrophthalmus

Habitat

Forest

Diet

Caterpillars and other insects

Plumage

Brown above and white below with a red ring around the eye and a black bill

Egg Color

Greenish-blue, unmarked

You may begin seeing Black-billed Cuckoo's make their way north to Woodcock around April. These birds make their nests high on branches in wooded forests, and feed on larger insects like caterpillars. Their call notes are similar to other Cuckoo's, but can be distinguished by their three note pattern. Farmers would say when you hear a Cuckoo it's going to rain, giving them the name of rain crows.

The photo on the first slide comes from David Rupp, owner and guide at IndiGo Birding Nature Tours. That Black-billed Cuckoo was found on a tour of Yellowwood State Forest in Brown County Indiana. David says "We were all so excited to see it that it took us a moment before we realized that it was a Black-billed Cuckoo, not a Yellow-billed! The muted striping on its tail and the black bill caught our attention to help with the ID. Then we got to watch it eat a large caterpillar, one of their favorite foods. This bird was likely fueling up as it migrated north."

The Black-billed Cuckoo pictured in the last slide also comes from David. This spotting was at Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary on Chicago's shoreline. David says "Once I spotted this Black-billed Cuckoo, the crowds of appreciative birders and photographers gathered to enjoy a cooperative bird posing to show off its red eye ring. Soon thereafter it went back to feeding on a tent caterpillar nest. It's one of the few birds that will eat these spiny pests."

Kentucky Warbler



Latin Name

Geothlypis formosa

Habitat

Forest

Diet

Insects and insect larvae

Plumage

Brown above and white below with a red ring around the eye and a black bill

Egg Color

Greenish-blue, unmarked

Kentucky Warblers don't tend to travel much further north than Ohio. Within the state you'll even find they are much more common further south than in northern areas. It can be easy to confuse the Kentucky Warbler's song with the Ovenbird, which is another common migratory bird that nests at Woodcock. While the two songs have a similar cadence, Ovenbirds start lower and get louder with each sound they make until it ends. Kentucky Warbler songs stay the same volume the whole way through. If you're looking for a way to remember this birds' song, think of the Kentucky Derby. Like a racehorse, the Kentucky Warbler song says "a gallop, a gallop, a gallop".

If you hear a Kentucky Warbler, don't look to the tops of the trees but rather to the lower parts of the forest. These birds nest in the dense understory of forest, and feed on insects. They are ground foragers and look for insects on the bottoms of leaves above them. Deer overpopulation can be a serious issue for Kentucky Warblers as they depend on the shrubbery, vines, and herbaceous plants in the forest understory deers like to graze on.

Acadian Flycatcher



Latin Name

Empidonax Virescens

Habitat

Forest

Diet

Insects

Plumage

**Green back, white ring around eyes,
yellow bicolored bill**

Egg Color

**White with small brown spots on
larger end**

Acadian flycatchers are long-distance migrants that breed in eastern North America and travel to Central and South America in the winter. Different species of flycatchers are hard to distinguish based on appearance, the best way to differentiate them is by habitat and song. Acadian Flycatchers nest in forested areas about 8 to 10 feet off the ground in small trees. Flycatchers sit with a more upright posture, looking for anything flying in their vicinity. They'll fly from their perch to catch insects like wasps, bees, flies, beetles, moths, and caterpillars. You can remember an Acadian Flycatchers two-noted song as they say "pizza!"

Wood Thrush



Latin Name

Hylocichla mustelina

Habitat

Deciduous forest

Diet

Insects, invertebrates, fruit

Plumage

Reddish-brown above and white with bold black spots on their underparts, white eyering.

Egg Color

Turquoise-green with no marking

It's not too uncommon to spot a Wood Thrush at Woodcock despite their population decline for at least 50 years. They're among the larger of the Thrush's, having reddish-brown wings and large black spots among their breast. They are a forest bird and nest in various size trees spanning from 6 feet to 40 feet off the ground. With a diet of insects, invertebrates, and a lot of fruit, they spend a good amount of time in the lower parts of the forest. There have been studies of the Wood Thrush's at Woodcock dispersing the seeds of forest plants, most notably Ginseng. During our winter, Wood Thrush's would be a species that nest in forest above shade grown coffee plantations. Many people would say the Wood Thrush song is among one of the most beautiful bird songs, singing predominately at dawn and at dusk. They are one of the first birds to sing in the morning and last to sing in the evening. The Wood Thrush song is very melodic, listen for their phrase "ee-oo-lay".

Baltimore Oriole



Latin Name

Icterus galbula

Habitat

Open woodland and forest edge

Diet

Insects, fruit, nectar

Plumage

Males are orange and black with a solid black head. Females are yellow-orange, gray on head and back

Egg Color

Gray or bluish with brown, black, or lavender blotches

It's easy to spot a female and male Baltimore Oriole apart. Unlike monomorphic species of birds where males and females look alike, there are distinct differences in plumage that make Baltimore Orioles easy to distinguish. Males have three colors on them - black over the head and wings, orange body, and white bars on the wings. Females and immature males are yellow-orange on the breast, grayish on the head and back, with two bold white wing bars. It takes most Orioles 2 years to reach their full adult plumage. This makes it easy to spot a young male returning north to nest as they look significantly different from adult male Baltimore Orioles. They like to nest in more open forest along the edges of a pasture or stream, at Woodcock you may be able to spot them in tall trees surrounding the chestnut fields. Orioles build a unique type of nest called a pendulum nest. A pendulum nest is suspended from a branch, using the pocket hanging below to nurture eggs. This nest style also makes it difficult for cowbirds to parasitize their clutch.

If you go west to the plains states there are Bullock's Orioles, and when met with Baltimore Orioles the two species will hybridize. For a time, ornithologists decided the species were so similar that they would identify both birds as Northern Orioles. It would be rare to spot Bullock's Oriole at Woodcock. In the 1990s the combined species of Northern Oriole was eliminated, largely due to the differences in geographic region where both birds nest and the distinct zones hybrids would be found.

Orchard Oriole



Latin Name

Icterus spurius

Habitat

Open woodlands

Diet

Insects, fruit, nectar

Plumage

Males are black above and reddish-brown below. Females are greenish yellow with white bars on wings.

Egg Color

Light blue or gray, dark markings of purple, brown, black, or gray.

Orchard Orioles are striking birds with bright colors, with the one species having multiple variations. Adult males have reddish-brown underparts with a black head, back, and tail. Females look much different being an olive-yellow color overall, with two white wing bars and no black or chestnut coloration. Like Baltimore Orioles, it takes juvenile Orchard Orioles two years to reach their adult plumage. In the first two years young males resemble adult females but with a black throat and face.

There is a reason they're called Orchard Orioles as they prefer to nest in more openly wooded areas where there is space in between trees, like an orchard! While the chestnut orchard neighboring Woodcock is still maturing, in a few years those trees will be an ideal place for Orchard Orioles to nest. It's not uncommon to see one of these birds nests as close as 8 feet off the ground. Like other Orioles they build a pendulous nest that hangs down from the sturdy branches of a tree.

One interesting fact about Orchard Orioles is that once a mated pair's eggs have hatched, males will help attend to the hatchlings and watch over the nest while the female flies out to find food. When the young birds are ready to leave the nest the male will take half the fledglings and the female will take the other half to teach them how to find food, develop flight skills, and avoid predators. These birds are mostly insect eaters but will also feed on fruit like raspberries and mulberries.

The photo on the first slide shows a male Orchard Oriole. The male Orchard Oriole is slightly smaller than a Baltimore Oriole and is chestnut colored. His song sounds like a mix between a finch and a Baltimore Oriole. The photo on the third slide shows a juvenile Orchard Oriole taken by David Rupp, owner of IndiGo Birding Nature Tours. Rupp writes about this sighting that “on each of our visits to Bird's Eye View Lodge in Belize, we get to observe a variety of orioles in a tree on the edge of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. The orioles are taking advantage of the hummingbird feeders in the tree. The first-year male Orchard Orioles can be confusing at first with their yellow color and black throats, much different from the chestnut-colored older males.”

Great Crested Flycatcher



Latin Name

Myiarchus crinitus

Habitat

Open woodland

Diet

Insects, small berries

Plumage

Reddish-brown above, brownish-gray head, gray throat and breast, and bright yellow belly.

Egg Color

Creamy white to pink, spotted with brown or purple

The Great Crested Flycatcher is an interesting bird for many reasons, one of the main attributes that distinguishes them from other Flycatchers in this region is that they are cavity nesters. Great Crested Flycatchers are the only cavity nested Flycatcher we have in the eastern part of North America. They are aggressive when protecting their nests and defend against any woodpeckers or squirrel that wants their cavity. You can find their nests in tall mature trees as they tend to spend most of their time higher up in the forest. While they use typical materials to build their nests like twigs, leaves, and grass, they are also known to use snakeskin. With big dense beaks they are able to go after larger insects, and on occasion small lizards. They tend to catch their prey in flight, but will also hunt for food that is crawling on tree bark or the ground as well. Great Crested Flycatchers are a striking looking bird with a grey throat and yellow belly. You can point out their song by listening as they say “Wheeeep” 3 or 4 times in a row. During migration, most birds of this species travel to Central America. However, because of their larger body size you can still find Great Crested Flycatchers along the Gulf Coast and southern parts of Florida during the winter.

Indigo Bunting



Latin Name

Passerina cyanea

Habitat

Open woodlands

Diet

Insects, small seeds, berries, buds

Plumage

Males are blue all over with a silver gray bill. Females are brown with faint streaks and a white throat.

Egg Color

Bluish unmarked

The Indigo Bunting is a striking example of a dimorphic species, with breeding males showcasing vibrant blue plumage and a distinctive silver-gray bill. Females are brown with streaks on their breast, a whitish throat, and sometimes subtle blue hints on their wings or tail. Immature males show a mix of blue and brown as they transition into adult plumage. They have thick, dense beaks that suit them well for a diet of seeds, berries, buds, and insects.

You can spot an Indigo Bunting low on the forest floor as they are ground foragers. They also nest lower to the ground in vegetation or small trees. These birds can be found in open woodlands and on the edges of forests and fields. Their repetitive high pitched song can be heard as males find tall perches like trees, shrubs, and powerlines to sing on.

Eastern Towhee



Latin Name

Pipilo erythrophthalmus

Habitat

Forest edge, field, woodlands

Diet

Seeds, fruits, insects

Plumage

Males are black above and on the breast, with rufous sides and a white belly. Females are brown where the males are black

Egg Color

Creamy white to grey with brown spots

The Eastern Towhee is a vocal ground-dwelling bird commonly found in scrubby forests, overgrown fields, thickets, and forest edges. Males are bold in appearance, with black upperparts and breasts, rufous sides, and white bellies. Females have the same pattern but have deep brown where the males are black. These birds are rarely seen more than 10 feet off the ground and are primary ground foragers, scratching through leaf litter for seeds, fruits, and insects. Their nests are shallow, cup-shaped, and often placed directly on the ground, making them especially vulnerable to predators like cats.

Eastern Towhees are known for their loud clear song, listen for these birds singing the phrase "Drink-your-tea!" While northern populations of Eastern Towhees migrate south for the winter, there are some southern populations that will not migrate and remain year round. This decision is determined by food availability and climate, but has resulted in year round Towhees!

Scarlet Tanager



Latin Name

Piranga olivacea

Habitat

Deciduous forest

Diet

Insects, fruit, buds, berries

Plumage

Males are red with black wings and tails. Females and juvenile males are olive-yellow with olive wings and tails.

Egg Color

Greenish blue with chestnut, purplish red, and lilac specks

Scarlet Tanager's are hard to miss with their bright red color overall and bold black on their wings and tails. Females have a very different pattern from males, they are an olive-yellow color overall with darker wings and tails. Nonbreeding males look similar to females but with a black tail and wings. Denis Profrant, former professor at Hocking College and naturalist, would call out the distinctive scarlet color in nature for two things- the Scarlet Tanager and the pedals of hazelnuts!

Scarlet Tanagers are long distance migrants and fly far into South America for the winter. These birds eat a large variety of insects as well as fruit and buds. They nest high in the canopies of mature trees that would provide a good food source, such as oak, maple, and beech trees. The Scarlet Tanager song is repetitive, hurried, and hoarse. This bird's song is often referred to as a robin with a sore throat.



Hazelnut Plant

Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher



Latin Name

Polioptila caerulea

Habitat

Forest

Diet

Insects and other invertebrates

Plumage

Pale blue above and gray-white below with a black and white tail, white eye ring.

Egg Color

Pale blue spotted with reddish to dark brown

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are a small bird, yet incredibly energetic and very territorial, especially during the breeding season. These birds nest in wooded forest and prefer moist areas near habitat edges. You can hear their short jumble of sharp notes and whistles from the mid-canopy of forest, where they nest about 10 to 20 feet off the ground. These birds use lichen to build their nest and wrap spider webs around to hold it together. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest is a good indicator of a healthy forest as it shows the air is clean enough to support lichen growth! Both male and female Blue-gray Gnatcatchers have a bluish-gray body, pale breast, and a dark tail with white edges. Breeding males can be distinguished by the black "V" on their foreheads extending over their eyes.

Ovenbird



Latin Name

Seiurus aurocapilla

Habitat

Deciduous forest

Diet

Insects and other invertebrates

Plumage

Olive-green above and spotted below, black and orange stripes on head, white eyering

Egg Color

White with reddish-brown spots and speckles

Ovenbirds may be small, but their song can be hard ringing loud throughout the forest all summer. The ovenbird song progressively gets louder with each note, and stops after the loudest note. Listen for their repeated phrase, "Tea-Cher"! Males find a singing perch that could be 20 or more feet off the ground to project their song, females are almost always on the ground, which is where these birds nest. Ovenbirds are actually named after how their nest is built. Looking down on the forest floor, you wouldn't be able to spot their nest as it camouflages with the ground and there is not an opening on the top. The entrance to the nest is on the side, which gives it an oven-like look, naming these birds the ovenbird!

While the ovenbird disguises their nest well, their plumage also acts as a camouflage for them on the forest floor. They may not have bright colors, but their olive-green coloring allows them to blend in well with their forest surroundings. Ovenbirds eat insects and invertebrates they find on the ground or on the underside of leaves. One thing that negatively affects these birds in some places are earthworms. In forests that have been agricultural land in the past with earthworms, females may have a hard time finding materials to build their nests. Earthworms feed on leaf litter on the forest floor which is what ovenbirds use to build their nests on the ground.

Northern Parula



Latin Name

Setophaga americana

Habitat

Mature forest

Diet

Insects

Plumage

Adult males are bluish gray with yellow-green patch on back and undersides. Females are paler with similar patterns

Egg Color

White, speckled with red, brown, purple, or gray

The Northern Parula is a vibrant bird that can be rare to spot as they spend their time in the canopies of tall trees. Adult male Northern Parulas are bluish gray overall with a yellow-green patch on the back and 2 white wingbars. Adult females are a bit paler and typically lack the male's breast band. Both sexes have distinctive white eye crescents. Listen for their high pitched song coming from the treetops. They have a zippy song that climbs the scale and ends with a high note. Over the summer they are strictly insect eaters.

Northern Parulas build a very interesting nest, but it can be hard to spot as the lichen they use camouflages it well. Like the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, the Clean Air Act significantly helped the population of Northern Parulas increase in this area by supporting the growth of lichen these birds use to build their nests.

Hooded Warbler



Latin Name

Setophaga citrina

Habitat

Mature deciduous forest

Diet

Insects and spiders

Plumage

Adult males are olive-green above and yellow below with a black head and throat. Females are yellow but have no black hood.

Egg Color

Cream-colored with scattered brown spots

Hooded Warblers are a common forest bird to spot around Woodcock. These birds get their name from the males' plumage as they have a black hood that outlines their yellow face. Both sexes have white outer tail feathers that when they spread their tail to fly, you can see flashes of white. It's also believed that this flash of white can be used to startle insects and reveal where they are to these warblers. They forage for insects on the forest floor and also use a technique called hawking where they fly off a branch to catch an insect mid-flight. As they are strictly insect eaters, these birds migrate to parts of Southern Mexico and Central America for the winter.

Hooded Warblers are a smaller bird that like to spend most of their time in the forest understory. They don't nest more than a few feet off the ground, but always off the ground in shrubs or small trees. One issue these birds have with building a nest lower to the ground is cow bird parasitization. Listen for their short low pitched song as they sing through the lower levels of forest!

Prairie Warbler



Latin Name

Setophaga discolor

Habitat

Scrub

Diet

Insects, spiders, small fruit

Plumage

Adult males are yellow with heavy black streaks, a black eyeline, and a chestnut patch on back. Females are similar but paler with a grayish head.

Egg Color

Pale brown or gray, scattered spots

Prairie warblers prefer a specific habitat, however unlike their name they wouldn't be found in a prairie with no trees or shrubs. These birds' ideal habitat is a dense brushy area in more open land. It's common to find them in overgrown pastures, hayfields, and crop fields. While they like to nest in these habitats, it will not suit their needs forever. Once the land grows more into mature forest, Prairie Warblers will no longer nest in that area.

Prairie Warblers have a distinctive pattern with strong black marks, most noticeably a crescent shape under their eye. Both sexes are a bright yellow color overall. Males will find a small perch to sing from as they have a high pitched song that ascends the scale. Like other warblers, they are strictly insect eaters and will migrate south for the winter. Their nest is not more than a couple feet off ground. However, if you get too close, these birds will use their distraction display to lure predators away from their nest.

Yellow-throated Warbler



Latin Name

Setophaga dominica

Habitat

Forest

Diet

Insects

Plumage

Adults have a bright yellow throat, black face mask, and a white eyebrow.

Egg Color

Pale greenish with dark speckles.

Yellow-throated Warblers are a vibrant yellow monomorphic bird with bold black streaking. They have the longest bill of any of the warblers, which allows them to forage around tree trunks and the crevices of bark for insects. This bird's diet consists of beetles, caterpillars, flies, and other insects. As these birds are insect eaters, they migrate south to Central America for the winter.

At Woodcock you may spot a Yellow-throated Warbler in a large sycamore or pine tree. These birds don't travel much more north than Ohio, as they like tall trees along streams that are more common further south. Because they are always high up in the canopies of tall trees, they used to have the name Sycamore Warbler. It can be difficult to spot their nest as they stay high in the tree tops, but listen for their repeating song with the last couple of notes trailing off towards the end.

Yellow Warbler



Latin Name

Setophaga petechia

Habitat

Open woodlands

Diet

Insects

Plumage

Uniformly yellow, males have red streaks on underparts. Both sexes have patches of yellow in the tail.

Egg Color

Grayish or greenish white with dark spots

Yellow warblers are a bright yellow bird with a greenish tint on the back. The males have red streaks on their breasts that females do not. You wouldn't find these birds deep in the forest as they prefer the shrubbery on the forest edge. These birds nest closer to the ground in small trees or shrubs. With their nest close to the ground, they are susceptible to cowbird parasiticism. However, the Yellow Warbler uses defense mechanisms like building a new nest on top of the parasitized nest to lay a new clutch of eggs.

Yellow Warblers are one of the earliest migrants to begin making their way to Central America. These birds have a bubbly song that has a zig zag pattern. Listen for their phrase when they sing, "Sweet-Sweet-I'm so sweet". You may not have to travel far to see these birds, they can even be found in residential areas with enough trees and shrubs for the yellow warbler to nest in.

Yellow-throated Vireo



Latin Name

Vireo flavifrons

Habitat

Open woodlands

Diet

Insects and spiders

Plumage

live green head with a yellow throat and chest. Lower belly is bright white.

Egg Color

Creamy white with sparse dark spots around larger end

Yellow-throated Vireos can be spotted high in tall trees. These birds have a bright yellow throat and a hooked upper bill. They have a similar song pattern to the Red-eyed vireo, but the Yellow-throated Vireo has a more raspy and coarse voice. They prefer a more mature forest where they can spend their time in the canopies of the treetops. It may be hard to spot their nest as they nest in tall trees in dense forest. They are insect eaters as well and are highly migratory birds. While they may not be as abundant as Red-eyed Vireos, you may find the Yellow-throated Vireo in large older trees at Woodcock. One interesting thing about these birds is that males will help in incubating the eggs. This differs from the Red-eyed vireos that do not tend to the nest much in the egg stage.

Red-eyed Vireo



Latin Name

Vireo olivaceus

Habitat

Forest

Diet

Insects and invertebrates

Plumage

Olive green above and white below. Gray crown and white eyebrow stripe bordered above and below by black lines

Egg Color

Dull white with sparse, sepia speckling

Red-eyed vireos are incessant singers, and sing at all times of the day. They have a simple two-noted song that has few pauses in between. Listen for the males as they say “see me, up here”. They have a small territory size which allows multiple pairs to nest in close proximity to each other. This also means there’s a good chance you’ll always be in ear shot of the singing males. Red-eyed Vireos are the most abundant forest bird in the eastern deciduous forest because of how small their territory is. They nest from mid canopy to upper canopy in taller mature forest. These birds prefer hardwood deciduous forest. Red-eyed Vireos come down lower in the forest to forage on the underside of leaves for caterpillars and other insects. During migration these birds can travel far, with some going as far as the Amazon highland regions.

