

Kids'
GUIDE TO THE
Birds
OF CENTRAL PARK

American Museum of Natural History

Where to Watch Birds

Freshwater

There are many freshwater habitats in the Park: lakes, small streams, ponds and the Reservoir. Birds depend on this water for drinking and bathing. Other birds rely on it to provide food: fish, aquatic insects, or underwater vegetation. Some birds use the water's edge or islands for shelter from predators or for nesting sites. Birds found in or near water often have long legs for wading or webbed feet for swimming.

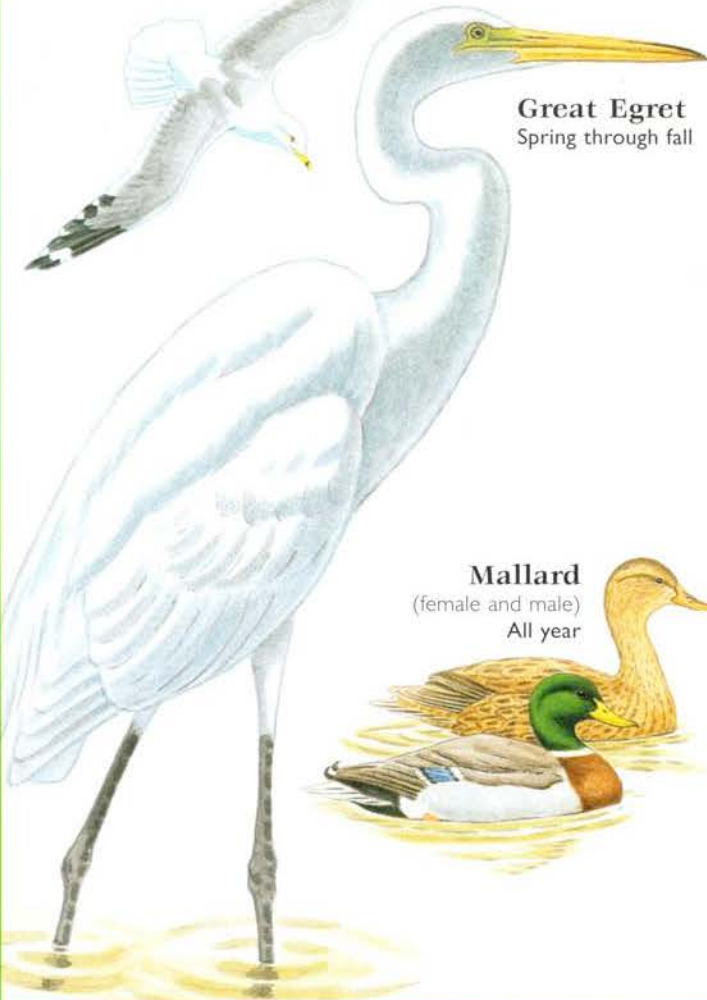
Birds you might see:

Ring-billed Gull

All year; most common in fall and winter



Great Egret
Spring through fall



Mallard
(female and male)
All year



The map will help you find these **FRESHWATER** habitats:

- Harlem Meer
- Reservoir
- Turtle Pond
- The Lake
- along streams in wooded areas such as the Loch and the Gill



Red-winged Blackbird
Spring through fall

Common Yellowthroat
Spring and fall



Ruddy Duck
(male and female)
Winter



Black-crowned Night Heron
Spring through fall

Double-crested Cormorant
Spring through fall



Mute Swan
Spring through fall;
non-native



Woodlands

Woodlands are places where many trees grow close together. Their branches form a canopy, shading the plants and animals below. A number of different kinds of birds make their home in woodland areas. This is where they find a variety of food: insects, spiders, seeds, berries, and even small mammals such as mice.

In the spring and fall many birds, such as warblers, travel long distances. During their journeys, they stop in the Park to rest and feed. Look for birds at many levels in the woodlands—in trees, in shrubs and on the ground.

Birds you might see:

The map will help you find these **WOODLANDS**:

- Ramble
- North Woods
- Hallett Nature Sanctuary



House Finch
(male and female)
All year;
non-native



Black-capped Chickadee
All year



Tufted Titmouse
All year



Red-bellied Woodpecker
All year



Downy Woodpecker
All year



American Redstart
Spring and fall



Black-and-white Warbler
Spring and fall



Baltimore Oriole
Spring through fall



Magnolia Warbler
Spring and fall



Northern Cardinal
All year



Gray Catbird
Spring through fall



Blue Jay
All year

All images are males unless otherwise indicated.

Open Areas

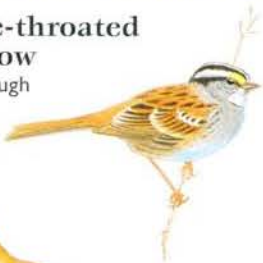
Gardens, lawns, small meadows, and field edges are the open areas of Central Park. For birds that nest in the woods, these nearby openings are great places to find worms, seeds, grubs, and other insects.

Don't forget to look up when you're in these open areas. You might see birds catching insects in the air or soaring overhead as they pass by during migration.

Birds you might see:

White-throated Sparrow

Fall through spring



Song Sparrow

All year



Mourning Dove

All year



House Sparrow

(male and female)
All year;
non-native



American Robin

Spring through fall



Red-tailed Hawk

All year



Rock Dove

(Pigeon)
All year;
non-native



American Crow

All year



European Starling

All year;
non-native

Common Grackle

Spring through fall



The map will help you find these OPEN AREAS:

- Wildflower Meadow
- Conservatory Garden
- Shakespeare Garden
- Great Lawn, open grassy areas throughout the Park



Chimney Swift

Spring through fall

Imagine...

if you were a bird flying over New York City, Central Park would look like an island of green in the middle of Manhattan. If you took a closer look, you'd see that this 843-acre "island" is made up of many different habitats: streams and ponds, woodlands, lawns, gardens and fields. These habitats are the places where birds find food and shelter. Some birds use several habitats and move freely among them. This guide shows some common birds and the habitats in which they are most often seen.



How to Watch Birds

Almost **200 different kinds of birds** can be found in Central Park during the year. This guide will help you identify 32 of them.

LOOK

- Where is the bird? Is it on the ground, in a tree, on the water, or overhead?
- What color is the bird? What parts of the bird are different colors?
- Is the bird large or small?
- What is the shape and length of the bird's beak?
- How does the bird move? Does it walk or hop when on the ground? Does it flap or soar when flying? Does it fly in large groups or by itself?
- Does it have special features, such as a crest on its head?
- Does it have easily seen marks such as red patches on the wings?



LISTEN

Birds make many sounds—whistles, warbles, trills, rattles. Since each bird species' song is different, you can learn to identify birds by their songs. You can tell what birds are present without even seeing them! Listen for the "mewing" of the Gray Catbird, or the "caw" of the American Crow.

You'll hear more songs in the spring. This is when male birds sing to attract a mate and defend their nesting territories. First learn the songs of the common birds, and then you'll be able to tell when a different bird is in the area. Watch singing birds to find out what sounds they make. You can also practice by listening to tapes or CDs of bird songs.

When to Watch Birds

TIME OF DAY

Most birds are more active in the early morning and late afternoon, although there will be some activity throughout the day.

TIME OF YEAR

Some birds live in Central Park all year long while others visit only at certain times of the year.

SUMMER

In late spring and summer, many birds in Central Park build their nests, lay eggs and raise their young. Watch for young birds learning to fly.

WINTER

Some birds, such as Long-eared Owls and White-throated Sparrows, only visit the Park during the winter. To see the sparrows and other songbirds, visit the feeders at Azalea Pond, which are kept filled by birdwatchers from November until April. The Reservoir and larger ponds are also good places to look for Ruddy Ducks and other water birds.

SPRING AND FALL

Each spring, many birds fly from their wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean to breeding areas as far north as Canada. Each fall, the birds return. These seasonal flights are called migrations. They are made in search of food or good nesting places.

Migrating birds need to find safe places to rest and feed along the way. Central Park is one of these important stopover spots. The best places to find warblers and other songbirds in early May are the Ramble, the North Woods, and the Great Hill. In fall, visit the Ranger Hawk Watch at Belvedere Castle to see and learn about migrating hawks.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

On sunny days, it's easier to see birds if you stand with your back to the sun. Cloudy or rainy days can also be good for birdwatching. Watch for birds bathing in puddles. Some storm systems can force migrating birds to land for shelter until after the storm, so look for birds after bad weather.

In spring, warm winds bring birds north, so you'll see more birds when the winds are from the southwest. In the fall, look for migrating birds, especially hawks, when the winds are from the northwest. Rain or shine, remember to dress for the weather!



What to Bring

- This pamphlet or other field guide
- Notebook and pencil to record what you see
- Binoculars if you have them
- Map of Central Park



NON-NATIVE BIRDS

Some of the birds in the Park were not originally found in New York City. They were either brought here from other countries or came here from other parts of the United States. Many of these birds have adapted well to life in the

city environment. Some of these "new" arrivals, such as European Starlings and Mute Swans, cause problems for local birds by competing with them for nesting space or food. Releasing non-native birds into the wild is not a good idea.

Help Keep Central Park a Home for Birds



Central Park provides important habitats for nesting and migratory birds, as well as for many other plants and animals. The forests, fields, and wetlands in the Park provide food and shelter for wildlife. They give us shade in the summer and cleanse our air and water. They are also wonderful places for us to play, where we can learn about and enjoy nature.

New York City's parks and natural areas are shared by plants and animals (including people). To ensure that our parks stay healthy for all, keep the following in mind:

BE A GOOD BIRDER!

- **Watch quietly and move slowly**—you'll see much more.
- **Do not disturb** resting birds or birds on their nests.
- **Respect the Park.** Do not litter, remove plants, or disturb animals. Please stay on paved paths and do not climb over fences.
- **Teach others.** Help them learn about birds.
- **Volunteer** to help care for Central Park.



Go Birdwatching!

For a safe visit to the Park, go birdwatching with a friend, classmates, a Ranger, or your family.

TO LEARN MORE

For information about bird field trips, classes, or exhibits, contact the American Museum of Natural History, Central Park Conservancy, Linnaean Society, New York City Audubon Society or New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

Visit your local library or nature center for books about birds or tapes and CDs of bird songs. Also look for websites about birds.

Check the Bird Register at the Loeb Boathouse near Central Park Lake.

Visit the Birds of Central Park exhibit at the Henry Luce Nature Observatory at Belvedere Castle and borrow a birdwatching Discovery Kit.



Join an Urban Park Ranger program!
Call (888) NY-PARKS for information.

Call the Central Park Conservancy for more information about environmental education programs and volunteer opportunities (212) 310-6600.

Visit our website at www.amnh.org

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www.nycparks.org

Central Park
Conservancy
www.centralparknyc.org



A MAP OF CENTRAL PARK

