

Backyard Birding

Many native Georgia birds can be found in our own backyards! Follow these tips to identify (ID) birds in your own backyard.



Key Terms:

Plumage- feathering of the bird

Head- this is a good place to look for field marks (distinctive characteristics that can help identify a bird) such as eye color, eye rings, eye lines, etc.

Crown- top most region of the head, sometimes adorned with a *crest*, or tuft of feathers atop the crown of the head

Bill- beak of the bird; size, shape, and color can be used for identification

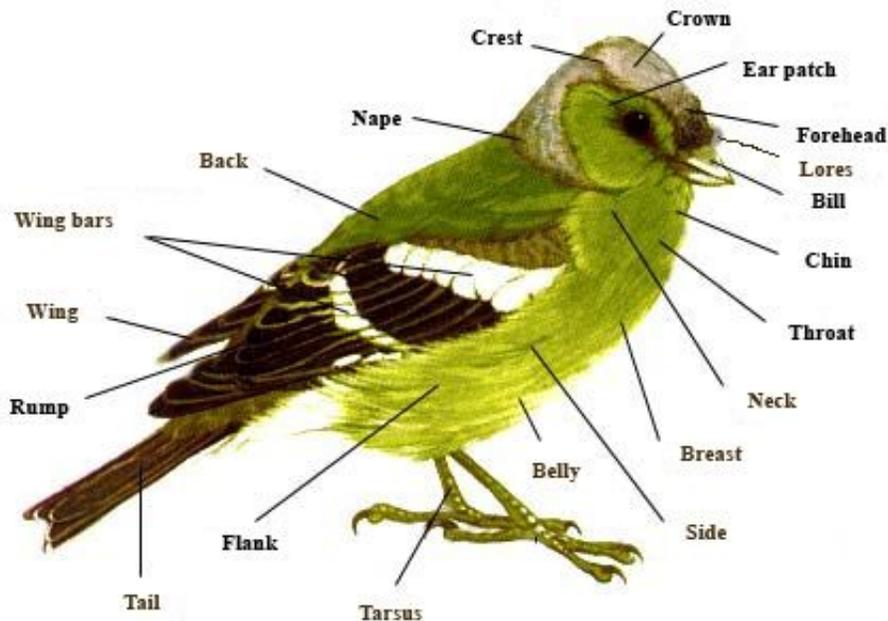
Throat- beneath the bill and above the chest, the throat can often be a different color than surrounding plumage

Breast- upright part of the bird between the throat and the belly, can often have distinct markings or coloring

Belly- underside of the bird

Tail- longer feathers at the very back of the bird; shape, size, and coloring can be very useful for identification

Wings- upper limbs used for flight; will often be adorned with colorful wing patches, wing bars, or other markings that can be used to help identify a bird



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Birding 101

Gather your tools: You can bird with nothing at all, but certain tools can help! Binoculars, a notebook and pencil, and a field guide (the internet can be used) are your birding best friends.

Stop, Look, Listen: When looking for any wildlife it is important to be still and be quiet. Scan the area you're in (your backyard, or whatever area you choose) and look for places birds hangout, an open perch or flying in the open sky. Quietly listen for bird songs and sounds, these can lead you to birds!

Identify: Once you find a bird, try to figure out what kind! Take notes in a notebook or on paper about the bird you find: where was it found, what was it doing? Don't forget observations about the appearance: size, color, any distinct patterns in the feathers, or marking on the head? Compare these notes to your field guide or internet resources and see what kind of birds you found in your backyard!

Helpful Resources: [All About Birds Bird Guide](#), [Merlin Bird ID App](#)

Common Backyard Birds in Georgia:

Red-headed Woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

This bird is easily identified by its bright red head and neck, large white breast, and black wings and tail. These birds are very common in Atlanta in the Spring!



Blue Jay, *Cyanocitta cristata*

Blue Jays are easy to spot for their bright blue coloring on the head, crest, wings, and tail. Though they are not all blue, they do have white-grey throat and belly, and a black band around the base of their head.

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Carolina Chickadee, *Poecile carolinensis*

The black crown and throat of this bird are the defining characteristics used in identification. They have a white face between the head and neck, and can usually be found in small flocks.



Northern Cardinal, *Cardinalis cardinalis*

In this species, the males are definitely easier to find, as they are the bright red colored birds commonly seen in Parks and backyards. Male Cardinals are bright red all over, including their bill, with a long tail, and small black patch around the bill. Female Cardinals, while not as easy to spot, also have a red bill, reddish crest on their head, and brown-grey upper parts.

