

LOCAL BIRDS

A diverse bird population calls western New York home. Scroll thru the gallery to see a sample of our many native birds.

Many people attract **Baltimore Orioles** to their backyards with oriole feeders. Such feeders work best with jelly or jam, and are orange instead of red and have larger perches than hummingbird feeders. Baltimore orioles are also fond of halved oranges. If they discover a well-kept feeder, orioles lead their young there. It received its name from the resemblance of the male's colors to those on the coat-of-arms of Lord Baltimore.

Northern Cardinals, in the family Cardinalidae, are passerine birds (with feet that are adapted to perching) found in North and South America. They are robust, seed-eating birds with strong bills. They are typically associated with open woodland. The sexes usually have distinctive appearances. The northern cardinal type species was named by colonists for the male's red crest, reminiscent of a Catholic cardinal's biretta.

The **American Goldfinch** undergoes a molt (loss of feathers in preparation for new growth) in the spring and autumn. It is the only cardueline finch to undergo a molt twice a year. During the winter molt it sheds all its feathers; in the spring, it sheds all but the wing and tail feathers, which are dark brown in the female and black in the male.

The **Great Blue Heron** is a large wading bird in the heron family Ardeidae, common near the shores of open water and in wetlands over most of North America and Central America, as well as the Caribbean and the Galápagos Islands. It is the largest North American heron.

The **House Finch** is native to western North America, and has been introduced to the eastern half of the continent and Hawaii. Adults have a long, square-tipped brown tail and are a brown or dull-brown color across the back with some shading into deep gray on the wing feathers. Breast and belly feathers may be streaked; the flanks usually are. In

most cases, adult males' heads, necks and shoulders are reddish. This color sometimes extends to the belly and down the back, between the wings. Male coloration varies in intensity with the seasons and is derived from the berries and fruits in its diet.

The **House or English Sparrow** is of the sparrow family Passeridae, found in most parts of the world. Females and young birds are colored pale brown and grey, and males have brighter black, white, and brown markings. Because of its numbers, ubiquity, and association with human settlements, the house sparrow is culturally prominent. It is extensively, and usually unsuccessfully, persecuted as an agricultural pest.

The **Purple Martin** is the largest North American swallow. These aerial acrobats have speed and agility in flight, and when approaching their housing, will dive from the sky at great speeds with their wings tucked. Martins make their nests in cavities, either natural or artificial. In many places, humans put up real or artificial hollow gourds, or houses for martins, especially in the east, where purple martins are almost entirely dependent on such structures.

The **Red-Bellied Woodpecker** is a medium-sized woodpecker of the Picidae family. It breeds in southern Canada, northeastern Mexico, and the northeastern United States, ranging as far south as Florida and as far west as Texas. Its common name is somewhat misleading, as the most prominent red part of its plumage is on the head; the red-headed woodpecker, however, is another species that is a rather close relative but looks quite different.

The **Red-Winged Blackbird** Claims have been made that the red-winged blackbird the most abundant living land bird in North America, as bird-counting censuses of wintering red-winged blackbirds sometimes show that loose flocks can number in an excess of a million birds per flock The male is all black with a red shoulder and yellow wing bar, while the female is a nondescript dark brown. Seeds and insects make up the bulk of the red-winged blackbird's diet.

The **Rose-Breasted Grosbeak** is a large seed-eating grosbeak in the cardinal family (Cardinalidae). It is primarily a foliage gleaner. It breeds in cool-temperate North America, migrating to tropical America in winter. The adult male in breeding plumage has a black head, wings, back and tail, and a bright rose-red patch on its breast. The adult female has dark grey-brown upper parts – darker on wings and tail –, a white supercilium, a buff stripe along the top of the head, and black-streaked white underparts

The **Ruby-Throated Hummingbird** is a species of hummingbird[a] that generally spends the Winter in Central America and migrates to Eastern North America for the Summer to breed. It is by far the most common hummingbird seen east of the Mississippi River in North America. The adult male has a gorget (throat patch) of iridescent ruby red bordered narrowly with velvety black on the upper margin and a forked black tail with a faint violet sheen. The red iridescence is highly directional and appears dull black from many angles. The female has a notched tail with outer feathers banded in green, black, and white and a white throat that may be plain or lightly marked with dusky streaks or stipples. Males are smaller than females and have slightly shorter bills. Juvenile males resemble adult females, though usually with heavier throat markings.

There are five currently recognized subspecies of **White-Crowned Sparrows**. These birds forage on the ground or in low vegetation, but sometimes make short flights to catch flying insects. They mainly eat seeds, other plant parts and insects. In winter, they often forage in flocks. White-crowned sparrows nest either low in bushes or on the ground under shrubs and lay three to five brown-marked gray or greenish-blue eggs.

The **Bald Eagle** is a bird of prey found in North America. A sea eagle, its range includes most of Canada and Alaska, all of the contiguous United States, and northern Mexico. It is found near large bodies of open water with an abundant food supply and old-growth trees for nesting. The bald eagle is an opportunistic feeder which subsists mainly on fish, which it swoops down and snatches from the water with

its talons. It builds the largest nest of any North American bird and the largest tree nests ever recorded for any animal species, up to 13 ft. deep.

Bald eagles are not actually bald; the name derives from an older meaning of the word, "white headed". The adult is mainly brown with a white head and tail. The sexes are identical in plumage, but females are about 25 percent larger than males. The beak is large and hooked. The plumage of the immature is brown.

The bald eagle is both the national bird and national animal of the United States of America. The bald eagle appears on its seal.

Photo credit: Norman Karp