

Songbird Sound Guide:

A Dichotomous Key to Identifying the Most Common
Birds of UConn

Confirming Bird Calls

Although this guide is designed to help identify birds through bird song, it is not fool-proof, and the phonetical representation of a bird's call may differ based on the listener's interpretation. If you have any questions concerning the identification of the bird you are listening to, use the QR codes provided within this guide or visit the Field Ornithology webpage at http://hydrodictyon.eeb.uconn.edu/eebedia/index.php/Sound_guide_to_the_birds_of_campus or the Cornell Lab of Ornithology page at <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/Page.aspx?pid=1189> to listen to professionally recorded bird calls to confirm your identification.



Good luck and happy birding!



Common Yellowthroat



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About this Guide:

The purpose of this guide is to promote interest in bird-watching and identifying through the use of bird song. It was created in hopes that faculty and students of the University of Connecticut will become more familiar with the birds and other wildlife of UConn. Patience and quiet observation are the keys to a successful viewing of the animals around us! Unless otherwise noted, all photos are credited to <https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B9RLUUhj84eQMHIvX21Cc2QxjQ&usp=sharing>.

How to Use this Guide:

The guide is designed so that beginner birders can have a leg-up to bird identification. As vocalizations are one of the most common methods of communication throughout the bird-world, it helps beginners to become familiar with their songs and calls. First identify the habitat you are in, and then listen for a few minutes to determine the type of sound you are hearing. The QR codes located next to the pictures of the birds can be very helpful in identifying the correct call as well as drawing in a specific bird species. Birds generally gravitate toward other birds of their species so playing their song by using these codes can be a helpful tool to see a specific species up close! Don't become discouraged and keep a positive outlook!

If the song is unusual and complex:



Wood Thrush: clear, sweet and flute-like; this bird has a low and odd-pitched song that can be best described as “Eee-oh-lay-oh!” ending with a high-pitched rasp



Veery: similar to the wood thrush, this bird has a cascading “Veer, veer, veer!” that sounds like multiple notes are being sung at once



Other common woodland species:

Black-capped Chickadee

Warbling Vireo

Mourning Dove

Eastern Phoebe

Photo credit:

Wood Thrush: http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/hermit_thrush/id

Veery: <http://www.larkwire.com/library/bird-sounds/1511/Veery-songs-and-calls>

Warbling Vireo: http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/warbling_vireo/id

Eastern Phoebe: <http://birds.audubon.org/birds/eastern-phoebe>

Woodland Birds

Habitat: Characterized by thickly growing forests such as the UConn Forest; likely to identify more birds through sound rather than sight

If song is high-pitched or sweet:



Ovenbird: song increases in volume as it progresses; a distinct drop in pitch on the second note, this bird seems to cry “Tea-cher, tea-cher, tea-cher!”



Tufted Titmouse: similar to the ovenbird, but this bird’s call is slightly slower and almost echoes itself “Pe-ter, Pe-ter, Pe-ter!”; there is no change in volume



Photo credit:
Ovenbird: <http://www.birdfellow.com/birds/ovenbird-seiurus-aurocapilla/photos/identification>

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Unlabeled photo credits: Kristiina Hurme & Alejandro Rico



Grassland and Edge Habitat Birds

Habitat: Characterized by expansive grassy areas and low lying shrubs with a forest line nearby such as Horsebarn Hill, the cemeteries around campus and the fields surrounding W lot; likely to identify more birds visually

If song is high-pitched or sweet:



Chipping Sparrow: like a jack-hammer, all notes of the same pitch



Black-capped Chickadee: Song is a sweetly singing “Fee-beeee, Fee-beee!” with a distinct drop in pitch for second note; call is a quickly rapping “Chicka-dee-dee-dee!”



Red-eyed Vireo: song is similar to a robin but much higher pitched; phrases come in triplets “Here I am! Where are you?”



Baltimore Oriole: Sweet whistling call that is highly variant; these birds can easily be spotted on tops of thickly growing shrubs



If the song is low-pitched or raspy:



Red-Winged Blackbird: harsh and dramatic “Conk-a-reeee!” – this bird’s call is unmistakable once learned



Eastern Phoebe: sounds like a raspy voice calling “Fe-beee! Fi breee?”



Mourning Dove: very sad hoo-ing call; often mistaken for an owl



Marsh Birds

Habitat: Characterized by forested wetlands and thick vegetation such as swamps around the Fenton, marshes by Horsebarn Hill, and both Swan and Mirror Lake; likely to identify more birds through sound rather than sight

If the song is high-pitched or sweet:



Yellow Warbler: A high pitched phrase all the same pitch – “Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweeter than sweet!”



Common Yellowthroat: A distinctive: “Witchity, witchity, witchity!” with a drop in pitch on each syllable of the word



Warbling Vireo: long and complex song, sounds almost like its asking a long question with the lifted-pitch end note



Chimney Swift: call sounds like a bird chittering on fast-forward; often heard from larger groups of swifts flying overhead



If the song is low-pitched or raspy:



American Robin: phrases come in triplets, wavering between two notes “cheer-i-lee, cheer-up!”



Blue Jay: call is a one noted “Cree!”; high-pitched but rasping





Bobolink: complex, raspy trill of notes; many birders say this bird always sounds like it is trying to sing too many notes at once



Gray Catbird: species call is a raspy “mew” similar to a cat; also a mimid – quickly runs through phrases of other bird species or sounds once, one after the other



Red-Winged Blackbird: harsh and dramatic “Conk-a-reeee!” – this bird’s call is unmistakable once learned



Other common grassland species:



Yellow Warbler: A high pitched phrase all the same pitch – “Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweeter than sweet!”



Mourning Dove: very sad hoo-ing call; often mistaken for an owl



Photo credit:

Chickadee: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black-capped_chickadee

Red-eyed Vireo: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/munshisouth10/group-projects/forestpark/forest-park/redeyedvireo/>

Chimney Swift: <http://minikahdagrounds.blogspot.com/2010/11/chimney-swift-tower.html>

Bobolink: <http://www.briansmallphoto.com/gallery/bobo.html>

Catbird:

<http://www.tamstuart.com/Slide%20Show%202003/pages/Gray%20Catbird%202158s.htm>

Mourning Dove: <http://www.aboywhocriedheron.com/2012/12/10/more-than-just-a-name/>