

# SANDY POINT STATE PARK: BIRDING GUIDE



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

General Info/ Birding Tips . . .	Pg 2
Birds of the Shorelines/ Waterways . . .	Pg 3
Descriptions . . .	Pg 4 & 5
Birds of the Forest, Meadows & Grasslands Pt 1 . .	Pg 6
Descriptions . . .	Pg 7 & 8
Birds of the Forest, Meadows & Grasslands Pt 2 . .	Pg 9
Descriptions. . .	Pg 10 & 11
Sighting Logs. . .	Pg 12 & 13
Glossary. . .	Pg 14

# GENERAL INFORMATION/ BEGINNER BIRDING TIPS



## Where to look

While it's easy to assume that the trees and sky are the primary places to spot birds, a stroll through the park reveals just how adaptable these creatures can be in a variety of environments. Birds have ingeniously learned to coexist with us, finding nesting spots in surprising places and making the most of the park's diverse habitats. From lush gardens and open fields to wetlands and wooded areas, each setting offers unique opportunities to observe their resourcefulness. Depending on the season, you might spot them gathering nesting materials, building nests, or foraging for food across the park. Their adaptability highlights not only their survival skills but also the fascinating ways they thrive alongside humans.

## How to see more birds

1. **Timing is Key:** Early mornings and late afternoons are often the best times to see birds when they are most active.
2. **Dress Appropriately:** Wear comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes. Neutral colors help you blend into the environment.
3. **Use Binoculars:** Invest in a good pair of binoculars (8x42 or 10x42 are popular choices) for a closer view. Practice using them before heading out.
4. **Bring Field Guides:** A field guide or a bird identification app can help you recognize different species.
5. **Listen Carefully:** Many birds can be identified by their calls. Learn some common bird songs to enhance your experience.
6. **Be Patient and Quiet:** Move slowly and minimize noise to avoid startling the birds. Finding a quiet spot and waiting can lead to great sightings.
7. **Keep a Journal:** Document your sightings, noting the date, location, and any interesting behaviors. This helps you track patterns over time. We have included a small log for your own sightings at the back of the guide!
8. **Respect Nature:** Stay on trails, don't disturb nesting birds, and follow local guidelines to protect wildlife.
9. **Join a community:** Consider joining a local birding group or online community. It's a great way to learn and share experiences.

## Useful tools for identifying birds

- The **Merlin app** from Cornell Labs is great for IDing birds based off their calls.
- The website **eBird.org** is a great reference tool and good for keeping a log of bird sightings.
- The **Seek app** from iNaturalist is good for IDing birds from photos taken with your cellphone camera or photos uploaded to the app.



# SHORELINES & WATERWAYS



Ring Billed  
Gull



Least Sandpiper



Great Black  
Backed Gull



Canvasback



Double Crested  
Cormorant



Snowy Egret



Royal Tern



Double Crested  
Cormorant



Mallard

Great Blue  
Heron



Green Heron



Osprey



Laughing Gull





The **Least Sandpiper** is a small, migratory shorebird with delicate brownish plumage that forages in flocks along mudflats and sandy beaches for tiny invertebrates. It is known for its slender bill, short legs, and energetic scurrying behavior.

The **Double-crested Cormorant** is a large black waterbird known for its long neck, distinctive double crests during breeding, and bright blue eyes. Agile swimmers, they dive for fish and often perch with their wings spread wide to dry their feathers.

The **Great Black-backed Gull** is North America's largest gull, identifiable by its black back, white head and body, robust build and powerful yellow bill. Known for its loud calls, it scavenges and hunts for fish, often patrolling beaches and harbors.

The **Great Blue Heron** is a tall, majestic wading bird known for its long neck, large wingspan, and striking blue-gray plumage. Often found stalking wetlands and shorelines, it hunts for fish and frogs with its sharp bill, embodying tranquility with its graceful flight and poised demeanor.

#### **Bird Fact!**

The **Great Blue Heron** can build nests up to four feet across and just as deep. They also nest in colonies with some nesting colonies reaching up to 500 nests!

The **Ring-billed Gull** is a medium-sized gull known for the black ring around its yellow bill. Often found in diverse habitats from coastal areas to inland parks, they are adaptable and agile, frequently seen scavenging for food in large flocks.

The **Royal Tern** is an elegant seabird with a slender body, long wings, and black cap, known for its sharp bill and white plumage. Social and graceful, it forages along coastlines and nests in colonies on sandy beaches, often diving for fish.





The **Snowy Egret** is a graceful wading bird with all-white plumage, bright yellow feet, and a black bill, often seen stalking shallow coastal or wetland waters for fish, frogs, and crustaceans.

The **Green Heron** is a small, wading bird with a stocky build, greenish-black cap, and rich chestnut underparts, often found in marshes and lakeshores. It uses tools like bait to catch fish, utilizing stealthy movements and effective camouflage to catch prey.

The **Mallard** is a widely recognized duck species, with males featuring a vibrant green head, yellow bill, and white neck ring, while females are mottled brown for camouflage. Usually found in freshwater habitats, dabbling for food on the water's surface or grazing on land.

The **Canvasback** is a diving duck recognized by its sloped profile and striking red head, complemented by a black chest and grayish body. They are often found in freshwater lakes and marshes, feeding on aquatic plants and invertebrates.

The **Laughing Gull** is a medium-sized seabird recognized by its distinctive raucous call. Commonly seen foraging along coastlines, marshes, and urban areas, this adaptable and social gull often gathers in large flocks on sandy beaches.

The **Osprey** is a large raptor recognized by its striking white head and dark eye patches, often seen soaring over water while hunting for fish. A skilled diver, it plunges feet-first to catch its prey and typically nests near lakes, rivers, and coastal areas, building impressive nests on high platforms or trees.

# FORESTS, MEADOWS & GRASSLANDS PT.1



Eastern Bluebird



Cedar Waxwing



Ruby Throated Hummingbird



Black Vulture



Morning Dove



Canada Goose



American Crow

Northern Cardinal



Common Grackle



American Robin



House Finch



American Goldfinch





The **Eastern Bluebird** is a vibrant songbird with striking blue feathers and a warm orange-brown breast, found in open fields and gardens across North America. Its sweet, melodic song makes it a cherished symbol of spring and renewal.

The **Cedar Waxwing** is a sleek, social bird with a smooth brown body, a distinctive black mask, and striking yellow-tipped tail and red wing tips. Often found in flocks, it feeds on berries and fruits, enchanting observers with its soft, melodious calls.

The **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** is a small, iridescent bird distinguished by its emerald, green back and the male's vibrant ruby-red throat. Agile and skilled at hovering, they feed on nectar from flowers during the warmer months and can be seen all across North America.

### Bird Fact!

Hummingbirds migrate to Mexico and other parts of South America from places all across North America. Often making the journey across the entire Gulf of Mexico in one night, which is around 500 miles. Their migration can take as many as twenty-two hours or more of flight time.

The **Black Vulture** is a large scavenger with broad wings and a distinctive bare black head, often seen soaring on thermals in search of carrion. Social by nature, it plays a crucial role in the ecosystem by helping to clean up dead animals.

The **Mourning Dove** is a medium-sized bird with a light brown-gray body, subtle black spots, and a distinctive cooing call. Common across North America, it is easily recognized by its graceful flight and is often seen perched on power lines.

The **American Goldfinch** is a small, vibrant songbird, known for the male's brilliant yellow plumage and black cap during breeding season. They are often seen flitting among wildflowers and feasting on seeds.





The **House Finch** is a small, adaptable bird with a streaked brown body and vibrant red or orange accents on the males' heads and chests. Common in urban areas and gardens, they are sociable foragers and are frequently seen at bird feeders.

The **Common Grackle** is a striking blackbird with iridescent plumage that shimmers in purple and blue, known for its long tail and harsh call. Often found in large flocks in urban areas and wetlands, it has a diverse diet and is a familiar presence in many landscapes.

The **American Robin** is a familiar songbird with a bright orange-red breast and cheerful song, often seen hopping across lawns for worms and berries. A beloved symbol of spring, it builds nests in trees and shrubs, marking the changing seasons.

The **Northern Cardinal** is a striking songbird known for the male's vibrant red plumage and distinctive black mask, while females display warm brown hues with reddish tinges. Common in gardens and woodlands, they are easily recognized by their melodious whistles and prominent perches in trees or shrubs.

The **American Crow** is a large, intelligent bird with glossy black feathers and a distinctive caw, commonly found foraging in diverse habitats for insects, seeds, and carrion. Highly social and adaptable, they exhibit problem-solving skills and complex behaviors, often forming large communal roosts.

The **Canada Goose** is a large waterfowl with a distinctive black head and neck, white chin strap, and brown body, often seen in pairs or family groups. Known for their honking calls during migration in V-shaped formations, they are commonly found near lakes and wetlands, grazing on grass and exhibiting strong parental instincts.

### **Bird Fact!**

Did you know... Crows have been known to play practical jokes, tease other animals, wind surf just for fun, and even hold grudges against people for long periods of time.

# FORESTS, MEADOWS & GRASSLANDS PT.2



Brown Thrasher



Tufted Titmouse



Red Bellied  
Woodpecker



Piliated  
Woodpecker



Grey Catbird



Wild  
Turkey



Carolina  
Wren

White Breasted  
Nuthatch



Song  
Sparrow



Bald Eagle



Eastern Kingbird



Red Shouldered Hawk





The **Brown Thrasher** is a medium-sized songbird with a long tail and strikingly patterned brown plumage, typically found in dense shrubs and woodland edges. Known for its rich, varied song and skilled mimicry, it forages for insects and fruits using its powerful bill to dig in leaf litter.

The **Pileated Woodpecker** is a large, striking bird with a bold black body, bright red crest, and distinctive white facial stripes, typically found in mature forests. Known for its loud drumming and powerful foraging, it excavates large holes in trees, playing a vital role in the ecosystem by creating nesting sites for other species.

The **Gray Catbird** is a medium-sized songbird with slate-gray plumage and a distinctive mewing call, often found in dense shrubs and thickets. Known for its mimicry and curious demeanor, it is commonly seen in gardens and woodlands across North America during the breeding season.

The **Tufted Titmouse** is a small, lively songbird with a gray body, large black eyes, and a charming crest, commonly found in deciduous forests and suburban areas. Known for its sweet calls and curious nature, it forages for seeds, berries, and insects, making it a delightful presence at bird feeders and in gardens.

The **Red-bellied Woodpecker** is a medium-sized bird with a black-and-white striped back, a red cap, and a subtle reddish wash on its belly, commonly found in woodlands and suburban areas. Known for its loud calls and drumming, it forages for insects and seeds by drilling into trees, making it a lively presence in North America.

The **Wild Turkey** is a large, social bird with iridescent bronze and black plumage, a fan-shaped tail, and a red throat wattle, commonly found in forests and fields. Known for their distinctive gobbling calls and adaptability, they forage in flocks for seeds, nuts, and insects, symbolizing North American wildlife.

### Bird Fact!

Benjamin Franklin once argued that the national bird of the newly formed United States should not have been the Bald Eagle. Folklore suggests that he favored the Wild Turkey. However, it has never been confirmed that is the bird he would have chosen to represent our new nation.





The **Song Sparrow** is a small, adaptable bird with streaked brown and white plumage, a rounded body, and a bold dark spot on its chest. Known for its rich, melodic song, this social bird is commonly found in various habitats across North America, foraging for seeds and insects.

The **White-breasted Nuthatch** is a small, agile bird with a blue-gray back, white breast, and black cap, known for its unique headfirst descent down tree trunks. Commonly found in woodlands and at feeders across North America, it forages for insects and seeds, often wedging food into bark crevices, and is recognized by its sharp, nasal "yank-yank" call.

The **Eastern Kingbird** is a medium-sized flycatcher with a black cap, white throat, and gray body, notable for its white tail band. Known for its agile hunting skills and bold territorial behavior, it is commonly seen in fields, gardens, and along roadsides across North America.

The **Carolina Wren** is a small, lively bird with warm brown plumage and a distinctive white eyebrow stripe, often found in dense underbrush and gardens. Known for its cheerful, bubbling song and bold personality, it forages for insects and seeds, making it a delightful presence in the southeastern United States.

The **Red-shouldered Hawk** is a medium-sized raptor with distinctive reddish-brown shoulders, bold black and white wing barring, and a patterned tail, commonly found in wooded areas near water. Known for its loud call and hunting style, it perches to watch for small mammals, birds, and amphibians, showcasing graceful flight and keen eyesight.

The **Bald Eagle** is a majestic bird of prey with a striking white head and tail contrasting its dark brown body, boasting a wingspan of up to seven feet. Often seen soaring over lakes and rivers while hunting for fish and small mammals, it symbolizes strength and freedom in American culture, frequently nesting near large bodies of water.

### Bird Fact!

Did you know... the iconic Bald Eagle call you hear in movies is actually the call of a Red-Tailed Hawk! Bald Eagles make a call that sounds like a high-pitched giggle, not quite as worthy of the silver screen.

# BIRD SIGHTING LOG



<u>What</u> did you see?	<u>Where</u> did you see it?	<u>When</u> did you see it?	<u>What</u> was it doing?

# BIRD SIGHTING LOG



<u>What</u> did you see?	<u>Where</u> did you see it?	<u>When</u> did you see it?	<u>What</u> was it doing?



# HOW TO SET-UP BINOCULARS



To set up and use binoculars, first adjust the central focus wheel while looking at a distant object to achieve a sharp image. Next, adjust the right eyepiece for your vision if necessary, using the diopter setting. Finally, hold the binoculars steady at eye level and use the focus wheel to refine your view as needed.

## Glossary

**Bill:** A bird's bill, also known as a beak, is the hard, pointed structure that extends from the bird's face. It is used for feeding, grooming, and communication, and varies in shape and size depending on the bird's diet and ecological niche.

**Cap:** A "cap" in birds refers to the small patch of feathers on the top of the head, often contrasting in color with the rest of the plumage. It can serve various purposes, including camouflage and signaling during mating displays.

**Carriion:** The decaying flesh of dead animals. It serves as a food source for scavengers and plays a crucial role in the ecosystem by aiding in nutrient recycling and decomposition.

**Call:** A bird call is a vocalization produced by birds, typically used for communication, including signaling territory, attracting mates, or warning of danger. Calls can vary widely in pitch, tone, and duration among different species.

**Caw:** A "Caw" is the sharp, harsh cry made by crows and some other birds, often used for communication among flock members or to signal alarm. It typically consists of a series of short, repetitive sounds and is a distinctive feature of crow behavior.

**Cooing:** A soft, gentle vocalization typically made by doves and pigeons. It consists of low, melodious sounds and is often associated with courtship or social interactions among birds.

**Crest:** A "crest" in birds refers to a tuft or tufted feathers on the top of the head. Crests can vary in size, shape, and color and are often used for display during mating rituals or as a means of communication.

**Gobble:** The distinctive, rapid sound made by turkeys, especially during mating displays. This vocalization is characterized by a series of low, throaty bursts and can signal various behaviors, including attracting mates or asserting dominance.

**Migratory:** When a species, particularly birds, travels regularly between different regions, often for breeding or seasonal feeding. This behavior is typically driven by changes in climate, food availability, or breeding conditions.

**Perch:** A resting place for birds, typically a branch, wire, or other elevated surface. Perches allow birds to roost, feed, and survey their surroundings for predators or food.

**Plumage:** The feathers covering a bird's body. It can vary in color, pattern, and texture, playing important roles in insulation, camouflage, display, and communication.

**Raptor:** A "raptor" is a bird of prey that primarily hunts and feeds on other animals. Raptors, such as eagles, hawks, and owls, are characterized by keen eyesight, strong talons, and hooked beaks, which aid in capturing and consuming their prey.

**Soaring:** The act of gliding through the air with minimal wing flapping, typically done by birds to conserve energy while flying. This behavior often involves riding thermal updrafts or wind currents, allowing birds to cover large distances effortlessly.

**Wattle:** A fleshy, often colorful growth that hangs from the throat or neck of some birds, particularly in species like turkeys and cassowaries. It can play roles in mating displays and social interactions, as well as help regulate body temperature.