Bird Songs and Vocalizations

This handout may be reproduced and distributed as a teaching handout if the following conditions are met. Photocopies of this complete document must have a complete footer containing the authors name, email, and notice at the top of the first page. Enjoy learning bird songs and vocalizations. Bob Pettit redknot@earthlink.net 734-755-8832

The Song Group

A Song Group consists of either a heterogeneous group of birds with comparable sounding songs or an assemblage of related birds with or without similar sounding songs. These Song Groups include birds that say their names, make noises akin to familiar sounding objects, have phonetic presentation, have mnemonic (learning) phraseology, and are related or are not related. Some species may be classified in more than one group so overlapping is present.

Song Groups

1. Name-Sayer
2. Sounds of Objects
3. Phonetic Phrases
4. Mnemonic Phrases
5. Unrelated Species
6. Related Species

1. Name-Sayer
   - Northern Bobwhite  Black-capped Chickadee
   - Killdeer  Veery
   - Eastern Wood Pewee  Tennessee Warbler
   - Eastern Phoebe  Bobolink
   - American Crow  Dickcissel
   - Blue Jay  Chipping Sparrow

2. Sounds of Objects
   - White-breasted Nuthatch  Hermit Thrush
   - Marsh Wren (Long-billed)  Bobolink
   - Sedge Wren (Short-billed)  Field Sparrow

3. Phonetic Phrases
   - Flycatchers
     Eastern Kingbird  Great Crested Flycatcher
     Least Flycatcher  Olive-sided Flycatcher
   - Vireos
     Red-eyed Vireo  Yellow-throated Vireo
     Warbling Vireo  White-eye Vireo
   - Warblers
     Blue-winged Warbler  Golden-winged Warbler

4. Mnemonic Phrases
   - Marsh Wren  Sedge Wren
   - Veery  American Goldfinch

Mimic Thrushes
- Gray Catbird  Brown Thrasher  Northern Mockingbird

5. Unrelated Species
   - American Robin  Sedge Wren
   - Rose-breasted Grosbeak  Field Sparrow
   - Scarlet Tanager

6. Related Species
   - Mimic Thrushes
     Gray Catbird  Brown Thrasher  Northern Mockingbird
   - Thrushes
     Eastern Bluebird  Hermit Thrush
     American Robin  Veery
     Gray-cheeked Thrush  Wood Thrush
   - Swainson’s Thrush
   - Vireos
     Red-eyed Vireo  Warbling Vireo
     Yellow-throated Vireo  White-eyed Vireo
   - Warblers
     Blue-winged Warbler  Golden-winged Warbler
     Cerulean Warbler  Black-throated Blue Warbler
     Black-throated Green Warbler
   - Sparrows
     Chipping Sparrow  Swamp Sparrow

Name-Sayers

Throughout the world many birds have been named because of the manor in which their songs or vocalizations have been interpreted through the language of the listener.

The Name-sayers singing group is unique since all members have a song that is similar to their name. (How intelligent some birds can be!) Whistling or speaking their calling phrases easily imitates them. Practicing the Name-sayers first will give you confidence so that later you can imitate and learn other birdcalls, which are not so easily mimicked. They belong to other song groups and will be discovered later.

Northern Bobwhite
- The White goes up.
  - bob, bob, white
Killdeer
- kill-deer or kill-dee
Whip-poor-will
- Endlessly repeating.
  - whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will
Northern Flicker
- flick, flick, flick, flick, flickeeer
  - Substitute wick for flick OR - wick, wick, wick, wickeeeer

Eastern Wood Pewee
- pee-a-see OR pee-ur
Eastern Phoebe
- fee-be OR fee-bee
Common Crow
- cow OR cah
Blue Jay
- jay, jay or jeah, jeah
Black-capped Chickadee
- chick-a-dee-dee-dee or dee-dee-dee
Veery
- vee-ree reer-ee reer-ee reer-ee

Tennessee Warbler
- ten, ten, ten, see, see, see
Bobolink
- Sounds like playing a banjo.
  - bob-o-link-spink-spank
Dickcissel
- dick-dick-dick, sis-sis-sis-sis
Chipping Sparrow
- Long series of monotone chips somewhat musical. See Pine Warbler and Dark-eyed Junco.
  - chip chip chip chip

© 2015 Bob Pettit, redknot@earthlink.net

Holiday Beach Migration Observatory  Bird Songs and Vocalizations  Page 1 of 10
Birds make many different sounds that are difficult to classify as a song, call-note, whistle, and other vocalizations. There are a number of birds that mimic sounds that are man-made.

**Sounds of Objects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White-breasted Nuthatch</th>
<th>Hermit Thrush</th>
<th>Bobolink</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phrasing is like Morse code telegraph key. Dots and dashes as noted below.</td>
<td>Sounds like an ethereal flute.</td>
<td>Sounds like a banjo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S O S O S</td>
<td>tick-a, tick-a, tick-a, turrrrrr-ur.</td>
<td>Field Sparrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yank, yank, yank.</td>
<td>tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.</td>
<td>Sounds like a steel ball bouncing on a marble floor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-breasted Nuthatch</td>
<td>Sedge Wren</td>
<td>Q, Q, Q, D, D, D, D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tooting of an old fashion toy tin horn on one high-medium pitch.</td>
<td>Sounds like a bouncing steel ball on a hard surface. See Field Sparrow.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Phonetic Phrases</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The birds song or vocalization might remind us of a specific statement that has a special phonetic phrasing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see me here i am -or- bee, buzz, buzz -or- bee, buzz, buzz, buzz-or- che-bek! -or- thief! thief! hurt-burt-burt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Flycatchers</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Kingbird Series of bickering notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Crested Flycatcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thief is drawn out and may be given singly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thief! thief! hurt-burt-burt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least Flycatcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song is a nasal monotone that is repetitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>che-bek!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Vireos</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red-eyed Vireo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see me? here i am! see me? here i am!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-throated Vireo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like a slow Red-eyed Vireo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see me? (pause) here i am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warbling Vireo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can you catchem? if you catchem and you squeezeem. will he squirt? or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Mnemonic Phrases</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mnemonic means memory learning. Non-birding examples include: ROY G. BIV (light spectrum), My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas (Planets from sun outward.). These following songs are remembered by their description. It sounds like… Example: Its song is given in flight. Mimics other birds song.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Warblers</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue-winged Warbler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throaty, insect-like. One buzz, see Golden-winged Warbler. bee, buzz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden-winged Warbler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or three buzzes. Not as throaty as Blue-winged Warbler. bee, buzz-buzz-buzz.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Unrelated Species with Similar Songs</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Robin, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Scarlet Tanager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The call notes are a series of similar sounds; a rapidly repeated skip in groupings of one to four. skip Skip, skip. Skip, skip, skip, skip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose-breasted Grosbeak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The song of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak is rounded, softer, and more rapid than the Robins. The phrasing is similar but it lacks its flute-like nature common to thrushes. The notes are clearly whistled but slurred giving the song an overall mellowing quality. The last notes of the song appear to be inhaled or swallowed. The mnemonic to remember is a Mellow Robin. There is a call note, which is a metallic Click or Kick. Sometimes the song is so quiet and soft that the bird seems to be 30-60 feet away, but it is only 10 feet distance!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarlet Tanager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Scarlet Tanager is a Robin with a sore throat. The song is husky with the notes having a raspy sharpness. The phrases are quick and loud. The call notes are; tick, burr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Red-eyed Vireo

The Red-eyed Vireo has a series of repetitious phrases given at a rate of 35-40 per minute. Each phrase is separated by a distinct but short pause. The commonest phrasing is, see me? (pause) here i am! (pause) see me? (pause) here i am!

The first part tends to go downward, while the second part goes upward. It may be given while the bird is perched for several minutes or while it is systematically and swiftly feeding from food ingredient to food ingredient and branch-to-branch.

see me? here i am! see me? here i am!

Yellow-throated Vireo

The Yellow-throated Vireos song suggests the Red-eyed Vireos but it is much slower (17-20 per minute) and has a husky quality at a lower pitch. The pauses between phrases are much longer. Two different phrases are suggested;

veery? (a long hesitant pause) oh!

three-eights? (a long hesitant pause) three-eights?

The Veery goes upward and the Oh goes downward. The 3/8s doesn't change pitch much.

Both birds are found in the deciduous woods with the Red-eyed Vireo being more abundant. The Red-eyed Vireo may be said to have a fast song, while the Yellow-throated Vireo has a half-fast song. Occasionally you might hear a slow Red-eyed or a fast Yellow-throated.

Warbling Vireo

The Warbling Vireo lacks the black boarding of the eye line of the Red-eyed Vireo and is generally paler in color. Its song is a rapid warbling of a series of four uninterrupted phrases presented in a circular fashion or pattern with an up swing at the end.

The rhythm of the song is fast, twisting, and rotating with a jerky but circular motion. There is an up swing at the ending. A second phrasing may also be found.

can you catchem? 
if you catchem
and you squeezeem,
will he squirt?

OR
abba-gee-ja, abba-gee-ja,
abba-gee-ja, abba-gee

Related Species

Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Warbling Vireo

The three vireos, of the Genus Vireo, that are perhaps the most commonly encountered are the Red-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, and Yellow-throated Vireo. Their plumages help to separate them into two groups. The Yellow-throated Vireo Has wing-bars and spectacles (eye-ring with connecting bar over the bill) but LACK have heavy lines over the eye. The Red-eyed Vireo and Warbling Vireo each HAVE eye lines but LACK wing-bars or spectacles. Separation of these species using these plumage field marks is usually quite simple unless heavy foliage is evident then song is the best tool for identification.

The key to vireo identification is the Red-eyed. Understand and remember its song. Use it as a reference to the others. They sing while feeding. They are slow and methodical in feeding behavior. Look up, right, down take insect larva off bark or leaf. Look at the bill to see the upper mandible hooking over the lower mandible. Warblers have a sharpened pencil bill with on over hang.

Relate Species

Red-eyed Vireo

Looks like the Warbling Vireo.

Sounds like the Yellow-throated Vireo.

Bird Song Compact Disc (CD)

birdJam - Welcome to the revolution in learning bird songs!

birdJam Maker organizes and formats bird songs and, in many cases, adds photographs, for specific regions or specialty species collections. BirdJam Maker does not contain the songs, but is paired with a specific song collection to:

- Remove narration and bird name announcements for pure bird song playback
- Split double tracks so each bird is visible on an iPod
- Creates alphabetic, taxonomic, habitat, species and other playlists for speedy access
- Add definitive photographs (for most collections)
- Rename birds (i.e., an Eastern Bluebird becomes a Bluebird, Eastern) so you find them faster
- Add scientific names, song descriptions, and information about the recordings
- Provide bird names in English, Spanish, or French

Peterson Field Guides: Eastern/Central Bird Songs, Roger Tory Peterson, editor; Cornell Lab, 2003; $17.95 (CD) Keyed by page number to Peterson’s 5th edition of Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies

Common Bird Songs (with paperback) by Donald J. Borer, 2003, Dover Publications, $7.95.


Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs (Eastern Region), Lang Elliott with Donald and Lillian Stokes; Little, Brown and Co., 1997; Companion to Stokes Field Guide to Birds: Eastern Region, $29.95 (CD); $29.95 (cassette)

Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs (Western Region), Kevin J. Colver with Donald and Lillian Stokes; Little, Brown and Co., 1999; 4-CD set; Companion to Stokes Field Guide to Birds: Western Region, $34.95 (CD); $34.95 (cassette)

Peterson Field Guides: Eastern/Central Birthing by Ear, Richard K. Walton and Robert W. Lawson; Houghton Mifflin, 1989; This system uses pairing, comparative ideas, and mnemonics to create groups of bird-songs. $25.00 (CDs)

Peterson Field Guides: Eastern/Central More Birthing by Ear, Richard K. Walton and Robert W. Lawson; Houghton Mifflin, 1994; (CD) $29.95; This edition covers virtually all the warblers, plus many finches and sparrows, shorebirds, gulls, terns.

Guide to Bird Sounds, National Geographic Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 1986; $24.95 (CD)

Peterson Field Guides: Western Bird Songs, Cornell/Interactive; Cornell Lab, revised 1992; Keyed by page number to Petersons revised Field Guide to Western Birds. $21.50 (CD).
# Summary of Passerine Songs

## Flycatchers

1. **Olive-sided Flycatcher**  
   Perches on open snag and flies out (sally forth) a distance for an insect and returns to same perch.  
   ① *hic-three-beers*  
   OR  
   ② *hip-three-cheers*

2. **Eastern Wood-Pewee**  
   *pee-a-wee pee-a-wee pee-a-wee pee-ur*

3. **Alder Flycatcher**  
   Song a harsh, ripping *f-bee-o* or a burry *reebeet* or *reebeea* accent on 2nd syllable. Call note is *peep* or *pip* or *pit*.  
   ① *fee-bee’o*  
   ② *rrree-beep rreebeet rreebeea*  
   ③ *fee-beep knee-deep!*  
   OR  
   ④ *free-beer’*

4. **Willow Flycatcher**  
   Song a harsh *fitz-bew* or *rrritz-bew*, accented on the 1st syllable. Call note a mellow *whit*.  
   ① *fitz-bew fizz-bew*  
   OR  
   ② *rrritz-bew*

5. **Least Flycatcher**  
   Emphatic, nasal, and monotonous chant.  
   *che-bek! che-bek che-bek che-bek che-bek.*

6. **Eastern Phoebe**  
   May have a hoarse quality to the song.  
   ① *fee-be*  
   OR  
   ② *fee-bee*

7. **Great Crested Flycatcher**  
   *Thief* note is drawn out and may be given singly.  
   ① *thief! thief! burt-burt-burt*

8. **Eastern Kingbird**  
   Series of bickering notes

## Vireos

9. **White-eyed Vireo**  
   *pitch ´em-up-a-creeeek, quick´*  
   OR  
   *quick´, pitch ´em-up-a-creeeek*

10. **Yellow-throated Vireo**  
    Like a slow Red-eyed Vireo. (17-20 song/min)  
    *see me? (pause) here i am*

11. **Blue-headed Vireo**  
    Like Red-eyed but less repetitious, clearer, higher pitched but much slower meter.

12. **Warbling Vireo**  
    Circular song with connecting loops and an upward zip.  
    *can you catchem? if you catchem and you squeezeem, will he squirt?*  
    OR  
    *abba-gee-ja, abba-gee-ja, abba-gee-ja, abba-gee-ee.*

13. **Philadelphia Vireo**  
    Like Red-eyed, slower, higher pitched.

14. **Red-eyed Vireo**  
    Rapid and repetitive song sung while feeding and used as a reference for learning other Vireos. (35-40 song/min)  
    *see me? here i am! see me? here i am!*

## Crows and Jays

15. **Blue Jay**  
    Mimics squeaky pump handle, red-shouldered hawk call, bill clicks, etc.  
    *jay, jay*  
    OR  
    *jeeah, jeeah*

16. **American Crow**  
    *caw*  
    OR  
    *cah*

## Larks

17. **Horned Lark**  
    A long tinkling of notes descending in pitch.

## Swallows

[R. T. Peterson]

18. **Purple Martin**  
    Throaty, bubbly, and rich.  
    *tchew-wew*

19. **Tree Swallow**  
    Note, *cheet* or *chi-veet*. Also a liquid song.  
    *cheet*  
    OR  
    *chi-veet*

20. **Northern Rough-winged Swallow**  
    Rougher than Bank Swallow’s song.  
    *trit-trit trit-trit.*

21. **Bank Swallow**  
    A short dry buzz or rattle, *brrt* or *bijt*.  
    *brrt*  
    OR  
    *bijt*
22. **Cliff Swallow**
   More squeaky and husker than Barn Swallow.

23. **Barn Swallow**
   A soft *wit* or *kvik-kvik,* *wit-wit.* My become rapid when excited.
   *wit*
   OR
   *kvik-kvik,* *wit-wit*

### Chickadees, Nuthatches, and Creeper

24. **Black-capped Chickadee**
   *chick-a-dee-dee-dee*
   OR
   *deedee-dee*
   OR
   *peter peter*

25. **Tufted Titmouse**
   May be more than three. Rather rapid speed.
   *peter, peter, peter*
   OR
   *here, here, here*

26. **Red-breasted Nuthatch**
   Tooting of an old fashion toy tin horn on one high-medium pitch.
   *two two two two*

27. **White-breasted Nuthatch**
   Like Morse code telegraph key with dots and dashes.
   *yank, yank, yank yank, yank*
   OR
   *wood wood wood wood*

28. **Brown Creeper**
   Note, a single long thin *seeee* that is similar to the quick trebled note (*see-see-see*) of Golden-crowned Kinglet. Song is weak but has vibrant quality. [R. T. Peterson]
   *see-ti-wee-tu-wee*

### Wrens

29. **House Wren**
   *pass-seed-del-a, pass-seed-del-a, pass-seed-del-a, weed-del-a, weed-del-a, wheat.*

30. **Winter Wren**
   Long sustained, continuously, whistled tinkling twittering of many notes (100+). It ends with a very high soft trill. Longest wren songs in Michigan.

31. **Sedge Wren**
   Like a Field Sparrow.
   *tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, ticker*

32. **Marsh Wren**
   It sounds like an old-fashion foot-run treadle sewing machine. A guttural rattle.
   *tick’-a, tick’-a, tick’-a, turrrrrr-ur*

33. **Carolina Wren**
   Loud and repetitive song usually repeated in threes.
   - *tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle*
   - OR
   *wee-del, wee-del, wee-del*

### Gnatcatchers

34. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**
   Song, a thin squeaky, wheezy series of notes, easily overlooked. [R. T. Peterson]

### Kinglets

35. **Golden-crowned Kinglet**
   Song, a series of high thin notes (*see-see-see*) rising up the scale then dropping into a chickadee-like chatter. [R. T. Peterson]

36. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**
   Variable song starts with three or four high *tees tees tees,* then several low *tews tews,* and ending in a repetitious chant. [R. T. Peterson]
   *tee tee tew tew tew tew tew tew tew tew tew tew,*
   *ti-dadee, ti-dadee, ti-dadee.*

### Thrushes

37. **Eastern Bluebird**
   A soft song that sounds a long distance away while perched or in flight.
   - *true-ly true-ly true-ly true-ly true-ly*
   - OR
   *chur-we chur-we chur-we chur-we*

38. **VeerY**
   Like whistling into a rain barrel or through a plastic drainpipe. Call, a raspy *phew* or *view.*
   *vee-ree reer-ee reer-ee reer-ee*

39. **Gray-cheeked Thrush**
   Like a rising † Veery

40. **Swainson’s Thrush**
   A Veery in reverse † where the phrasing goes upward.

41. **Hermit Thrush**
   Like an ethereal flute.

42. **Wood Thrush**
   Mellow flute-like phrases. Call, a rapid *pip-pip-pip-pip-pip.*
   *ee-o-lay ee-o-lay*

43. **American Robin**
   Song; a long, caroling, emphatic staccato cadence. Call note; *tut-tut-tut.*
   *get-em, kill-em, cure-em, give-em physic*
### Mimic Thrushes

44. **Gray Catbird**
   Like Brown Thrasher but with non-repeated couplets. Call note: *Mewing like cat cry*.
   
   \[ \text{plow it! hoe it! seed it! weed it!} \]

45. **Brown Thrasher**
   New couplets each time.
   
   \[ \text{plow it!-plow it! hoe it!-hoe it! seed it!-seed it! weed it!-weed it!} \]

46. **Northern Mockingbird**
   Mimics other birds and has thrasher quality, repeating phrases several times (3 or more).

### Starlings

47. **European Starling**
   A series of whistles, pops, and squeaks. Mimics other birds: Killdeer, Yellowlegs.

### Pipits

48. **American Pipit**
   A thin *jee-et* or *pi-pit*, thus suggesting its name. [R. T. Peterson]
   
   * jee-et
   
   OR
   
   * pi-pit

### Waxwings

49. **Cedar Waxwing**
   A thin series of *zee* *zee* *zee* notes. [R. T. Peterson]
   
   * zee* *zee* *zee*

### Wood-Warblers

50. **Ovenbird**
   Begins softly and ends louder.
   
   \[ \text{teach'er, teach'er, teach'er, teach'er.} \]

51. **Louisiana Waterthrush**
   Song doesn’t end with Northern Waterthrush’s diagnostic *chew-chew-chew*. Louder and more musical than Northern Waterthrush; 3 or 4 shrill, slurred, ascending notes followed by a variable warbling twitter. [J. Curson, *et al.*]
   
   \[ \text{tut tut tut twit twit twee twee twee twee} \]

52. **Northern Waterthrush**
   Song begins with 3 or 4 loud, emphatic notes (twit twit twit twee twee twee twee) and ends in a diagnostic rapid series of notes that drop in pitch *chew-chew-chew* or weedleoo. [J. Curson, *et al.*]
   
   \[ \text{whi chë-rë chë-rë chew chew whë-eat whë-eat} \]

53. **Golden-winged Warbler**
   Not as throaty as Blue-winged Warbler. The 2-3 buzzes are rapidly delivered.
   
   \[ \text{bee, buzz-buzz-buzz (pause) bee, buzz-buzz-buzz} \]

54. **Blue-winged Warbler**
   One buzz, throaty and insect-like. The buzz is drawn-out. See Golden-winged Warbler.
   
   \[ \text{bee, buzz (pause) bee, buzz (pause) bee, buzz} \]

55. **Black-and-white Warbler**
   If you leave the pizza in the oven too long it becomes black and white (ash). Song is softly given. Look for the bird gripping the side of trunk or branches like nuthatches.
   
   \[ \text{pizza, pizza, pizza, pizza, pizza} \]

56. **Tennessee Warbler**
   Listen closely, this is a name-sayer. Look high in the trees.
   
   \[ \text{ten, ten, ten, see, see, see, see} \]

57. **Nashville Warbler**
   Common migrant and good singer. Watch the cadence.
   
   \[ \text{see-bit, see-bit, see-bit, tea dee dee dee dee} \]

58. **Mourning Warbler**
   First two notes higher pitched followed by lower pitched notes.
   
   \[ \text{cheery, cheery, choory, choory} \]

59. **Common Yellowthroat**
   Song is distinctive, rapid, and well enunciated. Think witches at Halloween and black mask over the eyes.
   
   \[ \text{witchity-witchity-witchity-witch} \]

60. **Hooded Warbler**
   A loud whistled song. The *wee* is higher and the *tee-o* is slurred. Like the Magnolia’s song but more ringing.
   
   \[ \text{weeta-see-tee-o} \]

61. **American Redstart**
   Song may be confused with some songs/calls of Chestnut-sided Warbler. Redstart song is loud rapid, and emphatic.
   
   \[ \text{zee, zee, zee, zip} \]

62. **Kirtland’s Warbler**
   Song resembles that of Northern Waterthrush’s. It starts with three low staccato notes; the first introductory notes are a quick *tutt tutt* the second notes are double notes done twice (*chë-rë chë-rë*), the third group are two higher single notes (*chew chew*) and the last are a double rapid resounding notes on a higher pitch uttered twice (*whë-eat whë-eat*). The whole series ends abruptly. [J. Van Tyne in R.T.Peterson]
   
   \[ \text{whi chë-rë chë-rë chew chew whë-eat whë-eat} \]

Two typical songs of KIWA [R.T.P.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>staccato</th>
<th>resounding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>tup tup tup</em></td>
<td><em>checheche wiwi</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>staccato</th>
<th>resounding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>tup tup tup</em></td>
<td><em>cheche whew</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63. **Cape May Warbler**
   Very high pitched. (Older male humans can use this bird for a hearing test.) Monotone.
   
   \[ \text{seet seet seet (pause) seet seet seet} \]
64. **Cerulean Warbler**
During migration look high in the trees for this bird. Throaty song beginnings on one pitch then moving upward and higher at the end.
\[ray, ray, ray, ray, zreeee\]

65. **Northern Parula**
Song a buzzy trill or rattle that climb the musical scale and abruptly snaps over the top. Also a second version with a series of buzzy notes that end in the familiar rising trill.
\[zeeeeeee-e-up\]
OR
\[zh-zh-zh-zheeeeee\]

66. **Magnolia Warbler**
Song suggests Yellow Warbler’s but is shorter. Yellow Warbler would not be heard singing in evergreen woods.
The last note is rising ↑.
\[weeta weeta weetee\]
OR
The last note is dropping ↓.
\[weeta weeta weeto\]

67. **Blackburnian Warbler**
The last portion is being stretched as it is sung upward ↑ and is very diagnostic if detectable. (↑ \[tseseeseeseese\])
\[zip zip zip titi tseeeeee\]

68. **Yellow Warbler**
Learn this song well since this is a common spring and summer bird and it will help in learning other members of its genus.
\[sweet, sweet, sweet, i am so sweet\]
OR
\[sit sit-suue-wheat\]

69. **Chestnut-sided Warbler**
A very emphatic song with the ending dropping suddenly.
\[pleased, pleased, ta meet miss beech’er!\]
OR
\[pleased, pleased, pleased, ta meet’ cha!\]

70. **Blackpoll Warbler**
A rapid series of 6-18 extremely high-pitched ‘si’ notes, often sounding slightly staccato. The speed is variable but the notes are always on one pitch and the middle notes are usually emphasized. [J. Curson, *et. Al*]
\[si si si si si si si si si si si\]

71. **Black-throated Blue Warbler**
Slightly nasal in tone with slurred notes the last note rising.
\[i am lay-zee\]
OR
\[beer-beer-beer, bee\]

72. **Palm Warbler**
Song, a chippy-like series of weak notes. [J. Curson, *et. Al*]
\[thii thii thii thii thii thii thii\]

73. **Pine Warbler**
There are several birds with similar ‘trilling’ songs. They include the Pine Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and to some degree the Yellow-rumped Warbler and the Swamp Sparrow.
The Pine Warbler has two common alternating song patterns (fast and slow trill) given by one individual bird. This is an identification clue, as the other trilling species sing only one song type and do not alternate. The songs of Pine Warbler have the most gentle and musical-sounding overall quality of the group. This is a result of relatively simple whistled phrases, with less dramatic changes in pitch and less complexity. In the slower song here a clear up slur can be heard, as the ending of each phrase is distinctly higher-pitched than the beginning. No other species in this group (Pine, Chipping, Junco) commonly uses phrases that sound up slurred (Chipping Sparrow is just too fast and noisy to hear the pitch change), and that, combined with the musical whistled quality of the song, will allow you to identify most Pine Warblers with confidence. Mostly found in tall pine trees. [See online reference Sibley] Include Yellow-rumped Warbler with this trilling group.

\[chip chip chip chip chip chip chip chip\]

74. **Yellow-rumped Warbler**
A loose Junco-like trill. Weak song.

75. **Prairie Warbler**
Soft, high pitched, going up the scale and becoming quieter toward the end. Uphill ↑
\[zee, zee, zee, zee\]

76. **Black-throated Green Warbler**
Nasal, breezy, and rapid.
\[trees, trees, whispering trees\]
OR
\[zoo-zee, zoo-zoo-zee\]

77. **Canada Warbler**
Hard to describe; lacks distinctive pattern; a jumble of emphatic musical notes, no two on same pitch, but often ends in an forceful wip.

78. **Wilson’s Warbler**
Song, a thin rapid little chatter dropping to pitch at the end.
\[chi chi chi chi chet chet\]

79. **Yellow-breasted Chat**
Song is a remarkable variety of whistles, rattles, squeals, rebukes, and meows.

---

**Towhee, Sparrows, and Junco**

80. **Eastern Towhee**
Call note, Chew wink.
\[Drink-your-teahehehe.\]
81. **Chipping Sparrow**  
The trill of Chipping Sparrow is nearly twice as long as that of any other species, and this is a consistent and very useful clue. In addition, the overall quality of the sound is usually mechanical and rattling, due to the complexity of each individual phrase. Long series of monotone chips somewhat musical. See Pine Warbler summary. Found in your yard.  

*chip chip chip chip ...

82. **Clay-colored Sparrow**  
Raspy insect-like series of notes. Like vibrating your tongue while growling.  

*feeed me. feeed me. grassy areas.

83. **Field Sparrow**  
Like a steel ball bouncing on a marble floor. Found in fields.  

*Q, Q, Q, Q, D, D, D, D, D

84. **Vesper Sparrow**  
Song Sparrow like but loud and fewer introductory notes. Breezy. Found near fields.  

85. **Savannah Sparrow**  
The first notes may be difficult to hear. Roadside fields.  

*teesit, teesit, teesit, teeseeee, tasaaaay.

86. **Grasshopper Sparrow**  
Monotone, unmusical, insect-like, buzzing. Found in fields.  

87. **Henslow’s Sparrow**  
Almost an inaudible call quickly stated with long pauses between songs. Insect-like song.  

*tease-lick tease-lick

88. **Le Conte’s Sparrow**  
A short, one-second, insect-like song burst, sounding as if it begins and ends by a click of a switch. [J. D. Rising]  

*rese-reece, z-z-z-buzz

OR  
*tzeeh-tzzzz tick

89. **Song Sparrow**  

*madge! madge! madge!  
*put on the tea kettle, eekettle.

90. **Lincoln’s Sparrow**  
Sweet and gurgling song with a quality of Purple Finch or House Wren. [J. D. Rising]  

*churr-churr-churr-nee-nee-nee-nee-wah-wah

OR  
*ootle ootle weetle weetle eeteeteetyaytoo.

91. **Swamp Sparrow**  
Like a slow and loud Chipping Sparrow. Waterways and marshes.  

*chip, chip, chip, chip, chip, chip

92. **White-throated Sparrow**  

*old sam, peabody-peabody-peabody. or oh!  
sweet canada-canada-canada.

93. **White-crowned Sparrow**  
The song is variable with many regional dialects, but distinctive. In the east and north it is characteristically two (one to four) clearly whistled notes, the second slightly lower than the first, followed by three descending buzzy or husky notes. [J. D. Rising]  

*dear-dear buzz buzz buzz.

94. **Dark-eyed Junco**  
Song a simple musical, metallic trill similar to Chipping Sparrow and Pine Warbler.  

**Tanagers, Cardinals, and Allies**

95. **Scarlet Tanager**  
Like a hoarse Robin. Call note; Tick-burr

96. **Northern Cardinal**  

*what! what! what!, cheer, cheer, cheer.

97. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**  
Mellow Robin that swallows the last note. Call note; Kick.

98. **Indigo Bunting**  
Each couplet is given as a series of phrases.  

*one, one; two, two; three, three; four, four

OR  
*fire! fire! where? where? here! here! see? see?

**Blackbirds**

99. **Bobolink**  
Sounds like a rubber band stringed banjo.  

*bob-o-link-spink-spank

100. **Red-winged Blackbird**  

*oak-la-ree

OR  
*aura-lee.

101. **Eastern Meadowlark**  
May be given in flight.  

*tee-yah, tee-yair

OR  
*spring is here

102. **Western Meadowlark**  
A tumbler of flute-like notes. Heard in western vintage movies.

103. **Brown-headed Cowbird**  
Male bows forward. Sounds like an old-fashioned water whistle.  

*glug-glug-glug-glееее.

104. **Orchard Oriole**  
A fast warbling song. Suggests Purple Finch’s song.
105. Baltimore Oriole
   A series of piping whistled notes.

### Finches

106. House Finch
   Fast lively warble with diagnostic notes at the end;
   **surreeeee**. May be given in flight.

107. Purple Finch
   A fast lively warbling song. Look for the bird singing at
   the top of the tree. See Orchard Oriole.

108. Pine Siskin
   Long buzzy notes.
   **surreeeee**.

109. American Goldfinch
   Also given in flight so it has the dip to go with it (song).
   **potato chips, potato chips**
   OR
   **virginia, virginia**

110. Evening Grosbeak
   Song, a short uneven warble. Call note, a ringing finch-like
   **chirp**. [R.T.Peterson]
   **cleer**
   OR
   **cle—ip**

### Old World Sparrows

111. House Sparrow
   **seal-it, seal-it, seal-it, seal-it.**

---

**Some Song References**

The material contained in this document has been gathered from personal observations, from conversations with fellow birders, and from the following published and internet sources.


http://www.allaboutbirds.org (Cornell Lab of Ornithology)


http://bna.birds.cornell.edu (The Birds of North America Online)

---

**Notes:**
**Words Used To Describe Bird Sounds**

Most of these words are from *Ornithology in Laboratory and Field* by O. S. Pettingill 1985, Academic Press.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>abrupt</th>
<th>discordant</th>
<th>laughing</th>
<th>rattle</th>
<th>stuttering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alarming</td>
<td>disjointed</td>
<td>liquid</td>
<td>rattling</td>
<td>suggesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alternated</td>
<td>distinctive</td>
<td>lispy</td>
<td>raucous</td>
<td>sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ascending</td>
<td>double-toned</td>
<td>lively</td>
<td>rich</td>
<td>thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>babbling</td>
<td>double-noted</td>
<td>long</td>
<td>rising</td>
<td>thready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bell-like</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>reedy</td>
<td>throaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bickering</td>
<td>dreamy</td>
<td>loud</td>
<td>reeding</td>
<td>throbbling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breezy</td>
<td>dropping</td>
<td>mellow</td>
<td>resonant</td>
<td>ticking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broken</td>
<td>dry</td>
<td>melodious</td>
<td>repeated</td>
<td>tinkle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bubbly</td>
<td>effervescent</td>
<td>metallic</td>
<td>repetitious</td>
<td>tinkling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burry</td>
<td>emphatic</td>
<td>mewing</td>
<td>repetitive</td>
<td>tirelessly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buzzing</td>
<td>energetic</td>
<td>mimic</td>
<td>reverberant</td>
<td>tremulous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buzzy</td>
<td>ethereal</td>
<td>mimicking</td>
<td>rollicking</td>
<td>trill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canary-like</td>
<td>explosive</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>rounder</td>
<td>trilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carol-like</td>
<td>faint</td>
<td>modulated</td>
<td>screaming</td>
<td>tumbler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caroling</td>
<td>fast</td>
<td>monosyllabic</td>
<td>screeching</td>
<td>tumbling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cat-like</td>
<td>fife-like</td>
<td>musical</td>
<td>short</td>
<td>twittering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chant</td>
<td>flowing</td>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>shrill</td>
<td>ululation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chip</td>
<td>flute-like</td>
<td>nasally</td>
<td>sibilant</td>
<td>up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chips</td>
<td>forced</td>
<td>noisy</td>
<td>sighing</td>
<td>unmusical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chipping</td>
<td>gabbling</td>
<td>oinking</td>
<td>similar</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chirping</td>
<td>gibbering</td>
<td>outburst</td>
<td>sipping</td>
<td>vibratory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chattering</td>
<td>grasshopper-like</td>
<td>owl-like</td>
<td>sliding</td>
<td>ventriloquial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheeping</td>
<td>grating</td>
<td>paired</td>
<td>slow</td>
<td>voluble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chiming</td>
<td>gurgling</td>
<td>pealing</td>
<td>slurrying</td>
<td>warbling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chucks</td>
<td>gushing</td>
<td>peeping</td>
<td>smacking</td>
<td>watery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chucking</td>
<td>guttural</td>
<td>penetrating</td>
<td>smacking</td>
<td>weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>churring</td>
<td>harsh</td>
<td>piping</td>
<td>soft</td>
<td>wheeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choppy</td>
<td>hiccupping</td>
<td>piercing</td>
<td>sonorous</td>
<td>wheezy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circular</td>
<td>hoarse</td>
<td>plaintive</td>
<td>sputtering</td>
<td>whining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear</td>
<td>hollow</td>
<td>pulled</td>
<td>squawking</td>
<td>whirring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clicks</td>
<td>hooting</td>
<td>putting</td>
<td>squeaking</td>
<td>whistling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coarse</td>
<td>hurried</td>
<td>quacking</td>
<td>squeaky</td>
<td>whooping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continuous</td>
<td>husky</td>
<td>quawking</td>
<td>squealing</td>
<td>yelping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooing</td>
<td>insect-like</td>
<td>quivering</td>
<td>squelch</td>
<td>zesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>couplets</td>
<td>instrumental</td>
<td>ambling</td>
<td>staccato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creaky</td>
<td>intoned</td>
<td>rapid</td>
<td>stentorian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crescendo</td>
<td>introductory</td>
<td>rapidly</td>
<td>strained</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>descending</td>
<td>jabbering</td>
<td>rasping</td>
<td>stretched</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Go Birding and Keep Looking Up!**

Consider becoming a member of HBMO. We’d like to have you join us and share our mission.

[http://hbmo.ca/become-a-member/]