

# How to ID Birds:

Learn the Seven S's of  
Birding:

1. Shade
2. Size
3. Silhouette
4. Signs
5. Songs
6. Sweep
7. Surroundings



What is it? **Dark-eyed Junco**

# How to ID Birds:

1. Determine group
  - Shape and Silhouette (Posture)
  - Signs (Behaviors)
  - Sweep (Flight Patterns)

## 2. Determine species



What is it? **Cedar Waxwing**

# Determine Group

There are general groups of birds:

Examples:

- Flycatchers
- Nuthatches
- Vireos
- Warblers
- Thrushes



What is it? **Northern Cardinal**

Groups are based on taxonomic families, and birds in the same family tend to be alike:

- Shape and Posture (Silhouette)
- Flight Patterns (Sweep)
- Behaviors (Signs)

# Determine Group: Shape

What are the proportions of the bird?

- Body shape? Chunky or slender?
- Size or length of wings, tail, legs, and bill in proportion to rest of body?



European Starling



[www.birdwatching.com](http://www.birdwatching.com)

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers

# Determine Group: Silhouette

How does the bird perch or stand?

Vertical?

Horizontal?



Great Crested Flycatcher



Mourning Dove

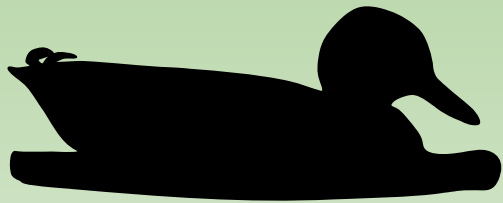


Blue-headed Vireo



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

# Determine Group: Practice Silhouettes



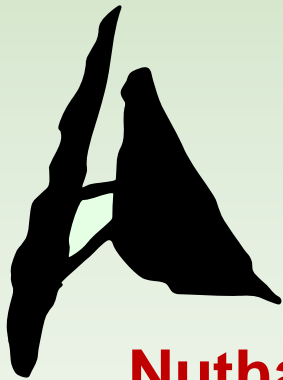
**Duck**



**Woodpecker**



**Swallow**



**Nuthatch**



**Starling**



**Wren**

# Determine Group: Signs (Behaviors)

- Does the bird have any conspicuous behaviors?
  - How does it forage?
  - How does the bird move through the landscape? (e.g., run, walk, hop, swim, dive, dabble)?
  - Does the bird do any unique behaviors (e.g., wag or bob its head or tail)?



What is it?

**Mallard**





Tennessee Warbler

- Quick, energetic feeders
- Usually continuously moving
- Darts around



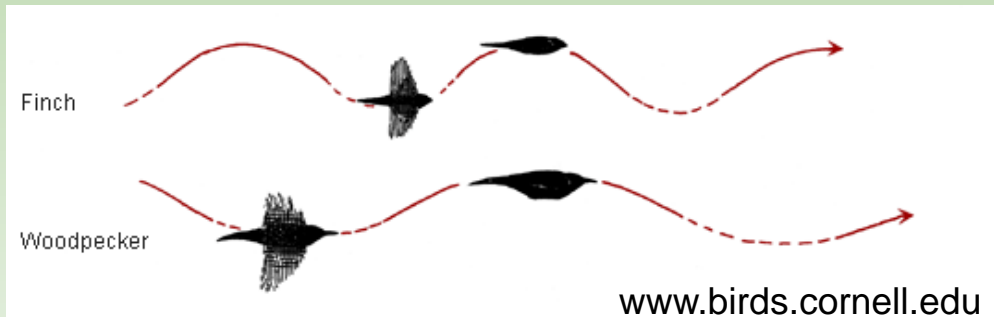
Red-eyed Vireo

- Perch still in one place
- Methodical movers
- Leave branch, capture and return

# Determine Group: Sweep

Does the bird have a distinguishing flight patterns?

- Does the bird undulate as it flies?



- Are the wing beats constant?
- Does the bird fly straight? Circle?



[Turkey Vulture flight pattern](#)