

Some birds have special tricks for survival:

- 1. Food:** Birds that have unique ways of finding or storing food increase their chances for keeping warm all winter.
- 2. Working together:** Birds of the same species, and sometimes different species, survive by cooperating with each other.
- 3. Special Adaptations:** Physical characteristics that help birds survive the winter months-some visible, some hidden.



Winter Feeding

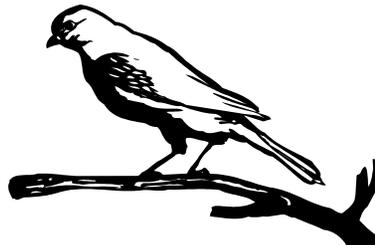
Backyard feeders make it easier for birds to find food in the winter, but birds are too smart to rely on them exclusively. Most get no more than 20 to 25 percent of their daily energy from backyard feeders. If you stop feeding, generally they will survive just fine. However, in severe winters birds do benefit from the supplemental food they obtain at feeding stations.

Find these common Iowa winter birds:

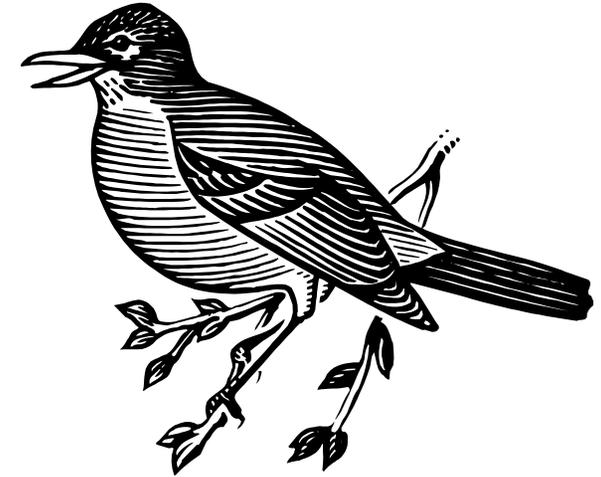
Rock Dove (pigeon)	American Tree Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Chipping Sparrow
Red-Bellied Woodpecker	Fox Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	Song Sparrow
Hairy Woodpecker	White-Throated Sparrow
Northern Flicker	Harris' Sparrow
Pileated Woodpecker	Dark-Eyed Junco
Blue Jay	Red-Winged Blackbird
American Crow	Common Grackle
Black-Capped Chickadee	Brown-Headed Cowbird
Tufted Titmouse	Purple Finch
Red-Breasted Nuthatch	House Finch
White-Breasted Nuthatch	Pine Siskin
American Robin	American Goldfinch
Cedar Waxwing	House Sparrow
European Starling	Northern Cardinal

Other birds you may see, depending on where you live...

Canada Goose
Mallard
Bald Eagle
Red-Tailed Hawk
American Kestrel
Ring-Necked Pheasant
Wild Turkey
Northern Bobwhite
Eastern Screech-Owl
Great Horned Owl
Barred Owl
Red-Headed Woodpecker



WINTER BIRDS OF IOWA



Only about 20 percent of Iowa's birds stay for the winter. While birds that eat insects are forced to migrate south, seed-eaters and meat-eaters have a chance to stay. Large birds have an easier time keeping warm, but small birds must have a trick up their sleeves in order to survive.

The key to survival for a bird in winter is the same as for every animal that must endure the snowy season. It needs to maintain an adequate body temperature by getting enough food each day and by protecting itself against the cold. It also must remain alert to avoid becoming food for another animal that is also trying to keep warm.

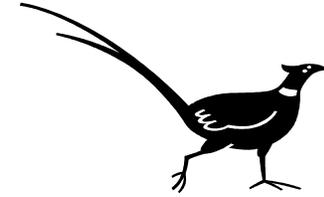
Shorter day length is a serious problem- there is less time to meet energy needs. Few birds have enough stored fat to survive more than overnight and part of the next day. Birds eat richer foods in the winter, such as beef suet and seeds, to maintain their metabolism.

All winter birds shiver throughout the cold months to keep warm. Shivering requires a steady supply of food to keep up with the repeated muscle contractions. Most birds grow 25-30 percent more feathers in the winter for extra insulation.

Did you know?

- ❖ **American Goldfinches** grow about 50 percent more feathers to keep warm in the winter, changing color from bright yellow to a safer light brown.
- ❖ **Northern Cardinals**, before 1850, were unknown in Iowa. Waste grain from humans enabled the birds to move here and survive winters.
- ❖ **Blue Jays** may mimic the call of a hawk upon approaching a bird feeder to frighten away other birds.
- ❖ **Red-Bellied Woodpeckers** change their diets in the winter months to include fatty seed from bird feeders when it is available.
- ❖ **Red-Tailed Hawks** lower their body temperatures and slow their heartbeats at night to reduce energy demands.
- ❖ **Blue Jays and Woodpeckers** take extra nuts and seeds and hide them in the cracks of dead trees, fence posts and in telephone poles to eat later.

- ❖ **Finches and Grosbeaks, like Pheasants and Grouse**, have large storage pouches called crops in their esophagi in which they pack seeds just before dark. In this way they can go on digesting and metabolizing food through cold nights or a blizzard.



- ❖ **Crows, Dark-Eyed Juncos**, and other birds live in communal flocks. Many eyes looking for food make finding it easier. Roosting close together in trees keeps everyone warmer. Staying together offers protection from predators as well.
- ❖ **Nuthatches** cling to trees upside down as they forage for food. This allows them to discover food hidden from the view of birds foraging in the normal fashion.
- ❖ **Black-Capped Chickadees** eat 20 times more food in the winter as compared to the summer months. At night, their body temperature drops 20 to 25 degrees and they go into a state of hypothermia in order to conserve energy.