

Bird Descriptions

These are some of the birds that may be seen at the Living Lab. Some may nest here while others may be passing through, during spring or fall migration. Most of the pictures are of males. The female of the species may be larger and have more muted or drab coloring.



David Walsh

American Goldfinch

A common bird in most of the United States, the American goldfinch is a mostly yellow bird with black wings, tail, and cap. Its rump and undertail are white. Listen for its distinctive flight call of “per-pe-po-pip” or “potato chip”. Often found at bird feeders it also can be seen flying among the treed areas.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Brown-Headed Cowbird

This bird is most noted as a nest parasite. This means they lay their eggs in nests of other songbirds leaving the host species to raise their young. Combined with the more important fact of habitat loss and fragmentation this nest parasitism has resulted in the decline of some songbird species. They are identified by their all black bodies and all brown head. Look for them perched almost anywhere at the Living Lab.



Peder Stenslie

Least Flycatcher

This bird belongs to a group of flycatchers called the Empidonax Flycatchers or known to birdwatchers as “empids”. Empidonax flycatchers are difficult to identify by sight alone, often only identified by sound, as most species look very similar. Least flycatchers are the smallest flycatcher found in North Dakota. Identified by its gray back, white under parts, cream-colored wingbars and small pale bill. Look for it perched in low branches along the riverbank or “fluttering” in the air as it picks insects “flycatching”, from midair.



Kristian Stenslie

Tree Swallow

Swallows are characterized by their slender bodies with long, pointed wings. They are very acrobatic, feeding with dart-like movements almost exclusively in mid-air. Tree swallows who are dark iridescent blue above and white below can be found flying higher over the river. Also, look for them in their nest holes in the dead trees on the riverbank.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

American Redstart

Another bright species of warbler, the American redstart is characterized by its all black body and patches of orange on its side, wings and tail. It is a common woodland bird in the eastern and northern United States. Look for it frequently moving (as with most warblers) through the shrub layer and trees along the river.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Chipping Sparrow

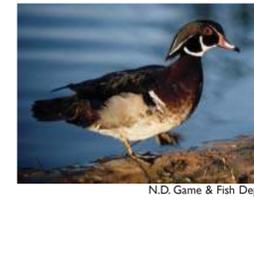
This sparrow is easily identified by its chestnut crown, white eyestripe, and black line that extends from its bill to back of head. Also of note is its pale belly. Listen for its rapid trill song of “chip” notes. Look for them in and around the evergreens by the Living Lab Conference Center.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Red-Winged Blackbird

This blackbird is easily recognized by its song of a gurgling “konk-la-ree” ending in a trill. It also has very distinctive plumage, of an all black body with bright red shoulder patches tipped with yellow. They are a common bird in any area that is close to water. While found primarily in marshes and sloughs, they do frequent areas around rivers. Look for them in the more open areas of the Living Lab.



N.D. Game & Fish Dept.

Wood Duck

This multicolored duck can be identified by its glossy plumage, red eye and greenish crest. Its call is a rising oo-eek. It is a common breeder in the Red River Valley. Another interpretive sign here at the Living Lab provides more information on this duck. There are wood duck nesting boxes located on trees throughout the Living Lab. Wood ducks can often be seen swimming near the bank or sitting in trees along the river.



Kelly Krabbenhoft

Baltimore Oriole

A striking songbird of the eastern United States, the Baltimore oriole has an all black head and black on its upper part of its back with a contrasting bright orange rump and underside. It also has a line of white on its wing. It is noted for its very musical song. Look for it in any of the wooded areas. It may visit hummingbird feeders.



Tim Driscoll

Coopers Hawk

This bird belongs to a group of hawks called Accipiters. Accipiters are characterized from other hawks by their relatively long tails and short rounded wings. They hunt songbirds on the wing in forests and in towns at bird feeders. A Coopers hawk has a rufous streaked breast and a dark blue-gray overall back. Look for them gliding from the residential neighborhoods to the west or perched in the denser stands of trees along the river.



David Walsh

Rose-Breasted Grosbeak

A large songbird of the northern forest, the rose-breasted grosbeak has very distinctive plumage. It has a pink or rose-colored breast contrasting with white below and a back of mostly black with the exception of a white rump. Also of note is its large heavy bill, characteristic of all grosbeaks. Look for it in the wooded areas along the river



David Walsh

Yellow Warbler

One of the most common warblers in the United States is the yellow warbler. It is an all yellow bird with reddish/brown streaks on its breast. It also has a dark eye that contrasts with its yellow body. As with all warblers it is a good vocalist. Listen for its distinctive song of “sweet, sweet, sweet, I’m so sweet”. It prefers riparian habitat so look for it among the mature deciduous trees along the river.



Alaska Maritime National Wild

Belted Kingfisher

This distinctive bird is characterized by its large bill and head, short legs, crest and blue plumage that contrast with its belly and chin of white which forms a “belt” along its chest. The kingfisher hunts for fish along rivers and lakes. Look for them flying along the riverbank or perched in low hanging branches. Also, listen for their distinctive “rattle” call. They dive like an arrow, head first with folded wings when they locate prey.



David Walsh

Gray Catbird

A very distinctive songbird of the eastern and west-central United States is the gray catbird. Characterized by their gray bodies, tail and cap of black, and under-rump of brown, they can be found fluttering and feeding in the underbrush and shrub layer of forested and riparian areas. Catbirds are in a group of birds known as mimics, although not as well known for it as their cousins mockingbirds, they will imitate other bird’s songs. However, they are most likely to make their customary catlike “mew” notes.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Song Sparrow

Another common sparrow in the area, the song sparrow has a brown and black streaked back and black/brown and white streaked breast. It has a spot of dark color in the middle of its breast. Look for the song sparrow in the treed areas, along the river, usually foraging on the ground or in low-level shrubs.



Kelly Krabbenhoft

White-Breasted Nuthatch

Another common year-round resident of the Living Lab this nuthatch has black on their head that extends down their neck giving the appearance of a hood. They also have an all white breast as their name suggests. They feed on insects found in tree bark. They are distinctive in their frequent head down search for insects. Listen for their repeated nasal “yank” call. Look for them flying in quick darting flights from tree to tree, climbing and descending trees and at the feeders.



David Walsh

Black-Capped Chickadee

One of the most common and hardiest of songbirds, the black-capped chickadee is a year-round resident of the Living Lab. They are a common feeder bird as well as a common woodland species. They are characterized by their black cap, black on chin and most importantly, at least some white on the wings. Look for them at the feeders or in any of the treed areas.



David Walsh

Spotted Sandpiper

The Sandpiper is a common and widespread shorebird throughout most of the United States. It is brown barred above and white with brown spots below. It has an orange bill. Its characteristic stance is body tilted forward, head held low. It bobs the tail up and down almost continuously. Look for it, usually alone, actively feeding and making quick flights along the riverbank.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers

These two woodpeckers are very similar in plumage and behavior. Some experience and perhaps a guidebook, is needed to separate these two species in the field. They are best identified by vocalization. The downy call is a higher pitched “pic” and the hairy has a loud, sharp “peek”. Both plumages are very similar. The downy is generally smaller with a short bill not as long as its head and the hairy is larger with a bill that is almost as long as its head. They are a year-round resident of the Living Lab. Look for them pecking on trees along the river or at the feeders.

Ideas for some of the descriptions came from the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America-5th addition.