

*cheerily, cheerup,  
cheerily*



George Sutton

American Robin

Knowing bird sounds can help you identify birds, even when you can't see them, and experienced bird watchers can identify most birds by their songs or calls alone.

Bird watchers use certain terms to describe different types of bird sounds. For instance, the Chipping Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and Pine Warbler repeat a single note rapidly in a type of song described as a trill. Northern Cardinals, Blacked-capped and Carolina chickadees, and Tufted Titmice produce clear, distinct tones called whistles. Other sounds are not so beautiful to our ears. Kingfishers produce a harsh rattle, Common Grackles squeak, parrots squawk, and herons and coots utter hoarse croaks.

Some birders like to “translate” bird sounds into human phrases called “mnemonics” so they can remember the sounds more easily. It doesn't take too much imagination to hear a Black-capped Chickadee saying *chick-a-dee-dee-dee* or a Mourning Dove calling *oo-WOO-hoo-hoo-hoo*. It might take a little more imagination to hear a Carolina Wren say *teakettle, teakettle, teakettle*, or to hear the Rufous-sided Towhee's *drink your tea*. Once you've made the connections, however, these phrases can be very helpful in remembering a bird's song.

Some birds are actually easier to identify by ear than by sight! For instance, Eastern Wood-Pewees and Eastern Phoebes are flycatchers that look very much alike. However, the pewee's song is a clear *pee-a-wee*, whereas the phoebe's song is loud, buzzy *FEE-be*.

*pee-a-wee*



William Poff

Eastern Wood-Pewee

*FEE-be!!*

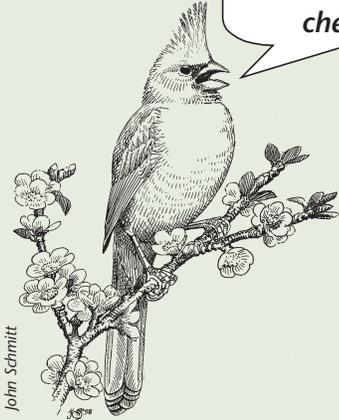


Lang Elliott

Eastern Phoebe

# Listening in on Birds

*cheer, cheer,  
cheer!*



## **Which Bird Sounds Like...**

1. *Caw, caw, caw*
2. *Cheerily, cheer-up, cheerily (song) or Chup, chup (call)*
3. *Chick-a-dee-dee-dee*
4. *Peter, peter, peter*
5. *Conk-a-REE*
6. *Perchickereee*
7. *Cheer, cheer, cheer or purdy, purdy, purdy*
8. *Oowoo-woo-woo-woo*

1. *American Crow*

2. *American Robin*

3. *Black-capped Chickadee*

4. *Tufted Titmouse*

5. *Red-winged Blackbird*

6. *American Goldfinch*

7. *Northern Cardinal*

8. *Mourning Dove*

## **Strategies for Learning to Identify Birds by Sound**

1. Focus on learning the songs or calls of one or two species at a time.
2. Track down singing birds to discover their identities. Watching a bird sing its song will really help you to remember that song!
3. Listen to recordings of bird songs. Bird recordings are a great learning tool and, unlike wild birds, you can replay them as often as you want. The BirdSleuth Bird ID CD-ROM allows you to see and hear a bird at the same time. Try playing the CD for the ten most common birds in your area, and then go outside and see if you can locate any of those birds just by listening.

More audio guides can be found in your local bookstore, online, or at a bird-feeding supply store. Peterson Field Guides, National Geographic Society Guides, and Stokes Field Guides are all excellent choices.

