Birds of Northeast Iowa

If you want to bring birds to your own backyard, provide their favorite foods. They also need water, as well as shelter, like bushes or trees. Keep a notebook handy so you can keep track of who visits you!

American Goldfinch

- Short, notched tail
- White bars on black wings
- Short, cone-shaped bill
- Spring males bright yellow with black forehead
- Females and winter birds dull yellow or brown with black wings
- Feeder Foods: sunflower seeds, nyjer
- Visits Iowa: year-round
- Habitat: weedy fields, floodplains, and backyards

Spring male

American Robin

- Large, round body with long legs and tail
- Gray-brown with warm orange stomach & breast
- White streaks on dark throat
- In flight, will show white patches on lower belly and under tail
- Foods: earthworms, fruits, berries
- Visits Iowa: spring
- Habitat: gardens, parks, fields, forests, pastures, and backyards

Baltimore Oriole

- Bright orange or yellow on belly, shoulders, tip of tail, and rump
- Black head, throat, wings, and tail
- Males much brighter in color than female
- One white wingbar on males; two on females
- Silvery, pointed bill
- Feeder Foods: grape jelly, oranges, nectar
- Visits Iowa: summer
- Habitat: open areas with tall trees, like parks and backyards

Male

Black-capped Chickadee

- Oversized round head with a black cap and throat
- White cheeks
- Gray back, wings, and tail
- Whitish underside and buff sides
- Small body with long, narrow tail
- Very curious and active
- Feeder Foods: sunflower seeds
- Visits Iowa: year-round
- Habitat: anywhere with trees or woody shrubs, like backyards

Blue Jay

- Crest on head
- Broad, rounded tail
- White or light gray underneath
- Larger than robins, but smaller than crows
- Various shades of blue, black, and white above
- Holds seeds or nuts in feet to peck them open
- Feeder Foods: sunflower seeds, peanuts
- Visits Iowa: year-round
- Habitat: forest edges, especially where there are oaks

Cardinal

- Males bright red all over with black around bill
- Females pale brown with red markings on wings, tail, and crest; black face
- Large crest of feathers on head
- Short, thick, red-orange bill
- Make a loud, metallic chirp
- Feeder Foods: sunflower seeds
- Visits Iowa: year-round
- Habitat: shrubby areas with people, like parks and backyards

Male

Downy Woodpecker

- Straight, chisel-like bill
- Small, not much bigger than a chickadee
- Checkered black and white
- White stripe down back
- Males have small red patch on back of head
- Looks like Hairy woodpecker, but smaller
- Feeder Foods: suet, peanut butter
- Visits Iowa: year-round
- Habitat: woodlands, parks and backyards

Male

Grackle

- Large, black birds with glossy body
- Purplish-blue head
- Males glossier than females
- Bright golden eye
- Flat head
- Long legs and tail
- Feeder Foods: white millet, cracked corn
- Visits Iowa: year-round
- Habitat: open areas like agricultural fields, feedlots, parks, and backyards

Male

Mourning Dove

- Small head and bill
- Slender, long, pointed tail
- Plump, light brown body with black spots on wings
- Black-bordered, white tips on tail
- Soft, drawn-out calls
- Feeder Foods: white millet, cracked corn
- Visits Iowa: year-round
- Habitat: anywhere but deep woods

Red-winged Blackbird

- Stocky and broad-shouldered
- Males glossy black with scarlet-and-yellow shoulder patches they can puff up or hide
- Females streaky brown
- Slender, cone-shaped bill
- Foods: grains, seeds, insects
- Visits Iowa: year-round
- Habitat: fresh and saltwater marshes, old fields, or pastures

Male

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

- Large, pale, cone-shaped beak
- Males have rosy-red patch on breast, black head and shoulders, white belly and patches on wings
- Females light brown with black streaks on sides, breast, and crown; pale stripe through eye
- Feeder Foods: sunflower seeds, safflower
- Visits Iowa: summer
- Habitat: forests

Male

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

- Slender, down-curving bill
- Short wings don't reach tail when bird is sitting
- Bright emerald or yellow-green on back and crown, with gray-white underparts
- Males have bright red throat
- Feeder Foods: sugar water, nectar
- Visits Iowa: summer
- Habitat: open woodlands, forest edges, and gardens

Male

White-breasted Nuthatch

- Large head with almost no neck and a long, narrow bill
- Gray-blue back with white face and underparts
- Black or gray cap and neck feathers that look like a little hood
- Feeder Foods: sunflower seeds, peanuts
- Visits Iowa: year-round
- Habitat: mature woods, particularly with deciduous trees