

# Winter Birds of the Coulee Region

by  
Dan Jackson



This is a simple guide to the most common birds found in the Coulee Region during the winter season. This includes birds that are found at feeders and in urban areas as well as species that will typically be found in the country. It is not meant to show every bird that you might see or to be a replacement for a good field guide. Instead, it is a primer aimed at people just dabbling in bird watching. I hope that it is a useful and good start for a life long hobby!!

For people looking for a more complete guide, I would suggest the 'National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America' or 'The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America.'

# Table of Contents

<b>Species</b>	<b>Page</b>
Ring-necked Pheasant.....	3
Turkey.....	3
Bald Eagle.....	3
Sharp-shinned Hawk.....	4
Cooper's Hawk.....	4
Red-tailed Hawk.....	4
Rough-legged Hawk.....	5
Golden Eagle.....	5
Mourning Dove.....	6
Rock Pigeon.....	6
Great Horned Owl.....	6
Barred Owl.....	6
Eastern Screech Owl.....	7
Belted Kingfisher.....	7
Red-bellied Woodpecker.....	8
Downy Woodpecker .....	8
Hairy Woodpecker.....	9
Northern Flicker.....	9
Pileated Woodpecker.....	9
American Kestrel.....	10
Northern Shrike.....	10
Blue Jay.....	10
American Crow.....	10
Horned Lark.....	11
Black-capped Chickadee.....	11
Tufted Titmouse.....	11
Red-breasted Nuthatch.....	11
White-breasted Nuthatch.....	12
Brown Creeper.....	12
Eastern Bluebird.....	12
American Robin.....	12
European Starling.....	13
Cedar Waxwing.....	13
Lapland Longspur.....	13
Snow Bunting .....	13
American Tree Sparrow.....	14
Song Sparrow.....	14
White-throated Sparrow.....	14
White-crowned Sparrow.....	14
Dark-eyed Junco.....	15
Northern Cardinal.....	15
House Finch.....	16
Purple Finch.....	16
Common Redpoll.....	17
Pine Siskin.....	17
American Goldfinch.....	18
House Sparrow.....	18
Terms and Definitions.....	19





Male

## Ring-necked Pheasant

Uncommon

L 21-33"

Ring-necked Pheasants are not native to the Driftless Area. They were introduced into North America in the late 1800s and continue to be planted by hunters. The male (shown above) is Crow-sized, colorful, and often has a very long, pointed tail. They are usually found in marshy or grassy open areas near grain fields.



Females

## Turkey

Common

L 37-46"

The Wild Turkey is one of the largest birds in the Driftless Area. Adult males can exceed 25 lbs. They are a game bird that spends much of its time in the woods. However, they can be seen in open agricultural fields looking for spent grain and other food.

During the winter, the hens and juveniles gather in large flocks—sometimes as big as 50 or more birds. The adult males (toms) are usually in separate smaller flocks (4-6 birds).



Adult

## Bald Eagle

Common

L 31-37" W 70-90"

Bald Eagles are among the largest raptors (birds of prey) in our area. After nearly being wiped out by DDT in the 1960s, their population has rebounded and they are now relatively common—especially along the Mississippi River and in the valleys of the Driftless Area. They nest in our area and those nests are increasingly found along streams and small rivers away from the Mississippi River as their population grows.

Bald Eagles take about 5 years to mature and to develop their



Juvenile

easily recognized white head and tail.

Juvenile Bald Eagles are generally mottled underneath and range in color from completely dark to heavily mottled. Regardless of their overall color, all juvenile Bald Eagles show whitish mottling under their wing pits. This, along with their very large beak, are important field marks for separating them from the very similar Adult Golden Eagle.

Bald Eagles like to eat fish, but will also hunt other small animals as well as eat carrion including car-killed deer and other animals.



### Sharp-shinned Hawk

Uncommon

L 10-14" W 20-28"

Sharp-shinned Hawks are winter visitors to the Driftless Area. They are members of the Accipiter genus and specialize in hunting other birds. They are very similar to their larger cousin the Cooper's Hawk. The adults of both species have slate grey backs and mottled salmon-colored breasts. Sharp-shinned Hawks have a lighter crown and nape that is the same color as their back. They also have a very squared-off tail and relatively thin legs. Juveniles are brown on the back with mottled white and brown on the breast. They may be seen hunting small birds around feeders.



### Cooper's Hawk

Uncommon

L 14-20" W 29-37"

Cooper's Hawks are year-round residents and nest in our area. Like the smaller Sharp-shinned Hawk, they are Accipiters and mostly hunt other birds. The adult Cooper's Hawk is very similar in color to the Sharp-shinned, but has a distinct black "cap" on the top of the head. They also have a rounded tail that is very distinctive in flight. Juvenile birds are brown on the back with white and brown streaks and mottling on the chest. Like Sharp-shinned Hawks, they often will be seen swooping into a yard to attack birds attracted to feeders.



Adult

### Red-tailed Hawk

Common

L 22" W 50"

Red-tailed Hawks are the most common soaring hawk found in the Driftless Area. They are a year-round resident and nest in mature forests.

Red tails are a large hawk and are often seen perched on the edges of open areas or near the top of wooded ridges. When soaring, the underside of the wings are mostly white with a very noticeable black bar along the leading edge of the inside part of the wing.



Juvenile

Juvenile Red-tailed Hawks are often fairly mottled on the chest and have some barring on the tail. Most adults lose much of the mottling on the chest and can be very white on their under side.

The top of the tail on a mature adult is reddish-brown and this is the field mark that gives them their name.

Their primary prey are mice and other small rodents that they spot by soaring over open areas. When they see a mouse, they dive to the ground and catch them with their talons.





Light Morph

## Rough-legged Hawk

Uncommon

L 22" W 56"

The Rough-legged Hawk nests in the far north in the tundra. They move south in the winter time and can often be found on the ridgetops in the Driftless Area during the winter months. When flying, they often hover in one spot for several seconds if they think they see prey. This can be seen in Red-tailed Hawks, but it is relatively uncommon in that species.

There are two color morphs in this species. The light morph is very light underneath with prominent, square black markings at



Dark Morph

the wrist on the under side of the wing. The tail is mostly white with a black band near the tip. They also have a very black belly band that is very unlike the belly markings of the similar Red-tailed Hawk.

The dark morph birds are almost solid black on top as well as underneath. The under side of the tail is white and black like that of the light morph. The underside of the wings are black with white flight feathers that have a black tip.

This is a very pretty hawk—especially in flight.



Adult

## Golden Eagle

Uncommon

L 30-40" W 76-102"

In the last 20 years, scientists from the National Eagle Center in Wabasha, MN have discovered that there is a significant population of Golden Eagles that spend the winter in the Driftless Area. They arrive in November and leave the area in March.

Unlike Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles rarely eat carrion. Instead, they prefer to hunt and kill their own prey. This includes medium-sized mammals, large birds including Turkeys, and rarely animals as large as small deer.



Juvenile

Because they are primarily hunters, they tend to perch less conspicuously than their cousin the Bald Eagle and can be very difficult to detect when perched.

Adult Golden Eagles are very large and almost completely dark underneath. Both adults and juveniles lack the white mottling in the wing pits that is seen in a juvenile Bald Eagle. The head of a Golden Eagle projects only about 1/2 as far as the tail and they have a relatively small beak. Both adults and juveniles have golden colored feathers on the top of the head and nape of the neck. Juvenile Golden Eagles have a tail that is 1/2 white and 1/2 black. They also show white "windows" near the wrist as shown above. When soaring, their wings form a slight "V".





**Mourning Dove**

Common

L 12”

The Mourning Dove is one of 3 species of doves found in this area and is the only one that is native. Most Mourning Doves are migratory and head south for the winter. However, a significant number do overwinter—especially if they find a reliable source of food such as a feeder. The Mourning dove has a slight salmon tint to its brown feathers and a very pointed tail that separates it from the other species of doves that you might see. In the winter, they will often perch on branches and sit motionless for hours after feeding. This is sometimes referred to as “lumping”.



**Rock Pigeon**

Common

L 12 1/2”

The Rock Pigeon is a member of the dove family this is not native to North America. It is an alien that was introduced from Europe. Most are blue-grey as shown above, but some can be quite varied in color—ranging from pure white to the natural color shown above. This species can be found in cities as well as on farms. They eat grain and take advantage of human activity. In rural areas they can often be seen on top of silos and barns of active farms.



**Great Horned Owl**

Common

L 22”

The Great Horned Owl is a year-round resident in our area. They are primarily active after dark, but can sometimes be seen during daylight. This species is one of the earliest nesting birds in the Driftless Area and start nesting in January. Their call is a very recognizable Who Who-Who Who Who. Often pairs will call to each other. In that case, the smaller male will have the lower voice. Their ear tufts and white bow tie are good field marks. They catch and eat a variety of prey including small to medium sized mammals and birds.



**Barred Owl**

Common

L 21”

Barred Owls are another common resident that nest in our area. They prefer woodlands and river bottoms and can be seen during daylight hours if you look carefully. Their call has often been compared to the phrase Who Cooks For You, Who Cooks for You-allllll. They nest in early spring and at that time pairs can be heard calling to one another with a very interesting set of calls that are referred to as monkey calls. They have dark eyes, no ear tufts and have a heavily barred chest.





Grey Morph



Brown Morph

## Eastern Screech Owl

Common

L 8 1/2"

The Eastern Screech Owl is our smallest resident Owl. Like the Great Horned and Barred Owls, it is a year-round resident in our area and nests here. This bird is only active after dark and can be tough to spot. It is a cavity nester and also roosts in cavities during the day. These can include natural cavities as well as Wood Duck boxes.

Eastern Screech Owls come in two color morphs. These are the grey morph shown to the left and the brown morph shown on

the right.

Eastern Screech Owls are the only small owl in our area with ear tufts. If you are lucky enough to see a small owl, look for them.

Eastern Screech Owls can be found by listening for their calls. They do a whinny call like Oohooohooohooohoo as well as a tremolo. Both of these calls are fairly soft and you must be close to hear them.

These are tough little owls. They eat small rodents and any other small prey that they can catch up to the size of a Mourning Dove.



Female



Male

## Belted Kingfisher

Uncommon

L 13"

The Belted Kingfisher is a common summer bird in our area that can overwinter in the right location. They nest and roost in burrows that they dig in cut out banks. They feed on small fish and minnows that they dive into the water to catch. Therefore, they will only be found in the winter on streams and rivers where the current will keep the water open even in very cold temperatures.

Trout Streams and spring ponds can be good locations to look for this bird in the winter. They have a loud rattling call that can

often be heard for a long distance.

They are wary birds and will flush if you get close. They usually call when flying and can give away their presence with their call.

They are blue/grey on the back and white underneath with a prominent crest and very large beak. The male has a single blue/grey band across the chest. The female has a second reddish band below and reddish flanks.





Male



Female

## Red-bellied Woodpecker

Common

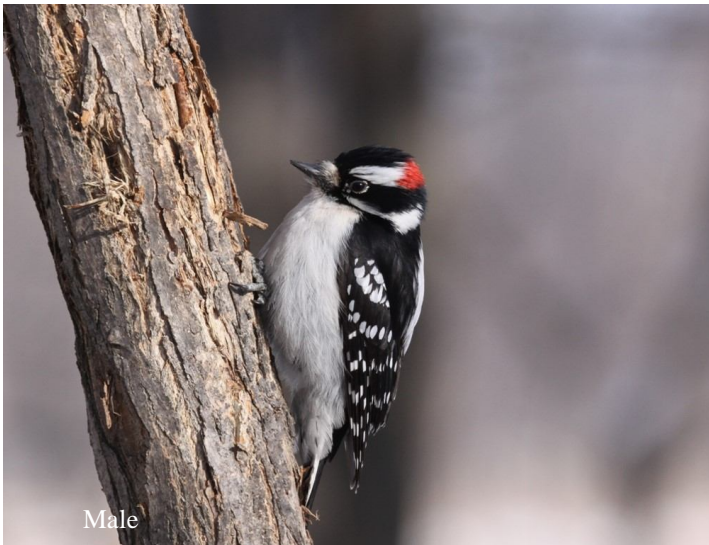
L 9 1/4"

The Red-bellied Woodpecker is a common resident in mature hardwood forests in the Coulee Region. They like relatively thick woods and have taken the place of the Red-headed Woodpecker that used to be common in the more open woods that were present years ago.

The male and female are very similar. Both have a cream colored face, throat, and belly. They have a black and white patterned back, wings, and tail and red on the top of the head and neck.

The male has a solid expanse of red that extends from the base of the bill and then over the top of the head to the nape of the neck. Female and juvenile birds have a little bit of red at the base of the beak, a grey crown, and then red on the nape of the neck.

This species gets its name from a small red patch on the lower belly near the legs. It is hard to see when the bird is perched since it is on the underside of the bird.



Male



Female

## Downy Woodpecker

Common

L 6 3/4"

The Downy Woodpecker is the smallest woodpecker found in the Driftless Area.

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers are nearly identical in their plumage. Both have bright white bellies and facial markings and have black on the head, back and tail with white mottling and stripes. One small difference is a set of black bars on the 2 outside white feathers on the tail on the Downy. Unfortunately, these marks are not easy to see unless the bird has flared its tail.

The most important feature to use to separate Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers is the relative size and length of the beak. Downies have a relatively small beak compared to its large cousin.

If you compare the beak to the width of the bird's head, the length of a Downy's beak will be less than half the width of the head. The proportionally larger and longer beak of a Hairy will have a beak that is closer to 2/3s the width of the bird's head.

Adult males of both species have a red spot on the back of the head. Females and juveniles do not.





Male



Female

## Hairy Woodpecker

Common

L 9 1/4"

A very common woodpecker in mature forests of the Driftless Area that will come to nearby feeders. It is basically a black and white bird with a mostly black back and a bright white belly and throat.

As discussed in the description of the Downy Woodpecker, this bird is nearly identical in plumage to the smaller Downy.

The two species differ in size (the Hairy is about 1/3 bigger), the

relative size of the bird's beaks (the Hairy's beak is proportionally much larger and longer), and the Hairy's lack of black bars on the outside 2 white feathers in the tail.

As with the Downy, an Adult male Hairy Woodpecker has a red spot on the back of the head. Females and juveniles lack this spot.



## Northern Flicker

Uncommon

L 12 1/2"

The Northern Flicker is a common summer resident in our area and a few individuals overwinter if they can find a stable source of food. This woodpecker is salmon in tone with a pattern of black spots on the underside below a black triangle. In the east, we see the Yellow-shafted morph of this species. This refers to the fact that the shafts of the flight and tail feathers are bright yellow. In the west, the Red-shafted morph is more common.



## Pileated Woodpecker

Uncommon

L 16 1/2"

The Pileated Woodpecker is the largest woodpecker in the Coulee Region. They are a year-round resident and nest here. The Pileated is a little smaller than a crow and is very noisy when it moves through the mature forests that it calls home.

This huge woodpecker has a tremendous beak that can easily cut a large hole in a dead tree. The holes of a Pileated are usually rectangular in shape. The bird's all black body, white markings on face and neck and wing, and prominent red crest make it easy to identify.





### American Kestrel

Common

L 10 1/2" W 23"

The American Kestrel is a small member of the Falcon family. The male is a gorgeous small raptor with a beautifully marked face, mottled chest, and a barred reddish back.

This small falcon eats large insects and small rodents and is often seen sitting on wires along the roadside in open country. It will also hover about 10-20 feet above the ground while it searches for prey.



### Northern Shrike

Uncommon

L 10"

The Northern Shrike is a small, Robin-sized raptor with a distinctive grey body with black markings on the back and face including a black mask the goes through eyes to the base of the beak.

This bird is sometimes called a "Butcher Bird" because of the way that it caches extra food. It will impale dead mice and other prey on long thorns or the barbs of a barbed wire fence. It prefers relatively open areas with large bushes or small trees. When hunting, it typically perches on the very top of those short trees.



### Blue Jay

Common

L 11"

The Blue Jay is a very recognizable bird. Its distinct grey belly, blue patterned back, and blue crested head are unique in our area. This bird is related to the crows and is among the smartest of the birds in North America. It often is found in small family groups that move together through the woods. They often come to feeders but also eat a wide variety of items including small animals and birds if the opportunity presents itself. This is why small birds are wary when it approaches a feeder.



### American Crow

Common

L 17 1/2"

The American Crow is another of the smartest birds in North America. It is an all black bird with a very distinctive "Caw Caw" call. It is an omnivore and eats a variety of items including carrion, spent grain, and small mammals and birds. It is a year-round resident in the Coulee Region and sometimes forms large flocks in the winter.

Its larger cousin, the Common Raven is typically not found in our area. That species is a little larger, has a proportionally larger beak, and has a more croaking call.





### **Horned Lark**

Common

L 6 3/4—7 3/4"

The Horned Lark is a common bird of open grassy fields. In the Coulee Region, they are often found on the ridgetops and often come to the side of the road for grit and seed in the winter. After a new snow fall, watch for them on the side of the road. As a car approaches, they often fly straight away from the road and then circle back to land again. They are named for the tiny horn-like feathers on the sides of the top of their head. They have a very distinctive face pattern that is easily recognized.



### **Black-capped Chickadee**

Common

L 5 1/4"

The Black-capped Chickadee is a very gregarious and talkative bird of our woodlands. They are very common at feeders and their distinctive black cap and throat and white face make them easy to recognize.

They are very inquisitive and will often check up on people who hike, walk, or hunt in the woods.



### **Tufted Titmouse**

Common

L 6 1/2"

The Tufted Titmouse is a southern bird who's range extends up to the Driftless Area along the Mississippi River. It is a very distinctive bird with a whitish belly, reddish flanks and gray on the top of the head, back and tail. It is one of only a few birds in our area with a crest and the only one that is grey. It has very prominent black eyes, beak, and a small black patch on the front of the face at the base of the upper side of the beak.

It is a very common feeder bird if the feeder is located near a mature forest area. They often arrive in small family groups.



### **Red-breasted Nuthatch**

Uncommon

L 4 1/2"

The Red-breasted Nuthatch is a small, active bird that is usually associated with evergreens. Like its larger cousin, it will often be seen heading head first down the trunk of a tree and can often be seen on the underside of branches. It is smaller than its cousin the White-breasted Nuthatch and has a reddish belly and a bold black stripe through the eye in addition to the black cap. Its back is slate grey.

Nuthatches get their name from their habit of stashing seeds and nuts in crevices in the bark of trees.





### White-breasted Nuthatch

Common

L 5 3/4"

The White-breasted Nuthatch, like its smaller cousin the Red-breasted Nuthatch are the only birds that will be seen going head first down a tree trunk or branch.

The White breasted is bright white underneath and slate gray and black on top. It has a black cap like the Chickadee and Red-breasted Nuthatch but lacks the black throat or eye stripe found on the other two species. It is a seed eater that is very common at feeders. It is a year-round resident in the Driftless Area.



### Brown Creeper

Uncommon

L 5 1/4"

The Brown Creeper is a secretive bird that feeds by moving head first up the main trunk of trees with gnarly bark. It uses a long, decurved beak to probe in the nooks and crannies for insects and other morsels. It often spirals up the tree and then flies down to the base of another nearby tree to start the process over.

It is well camouflaged and can easily be overlooked. However the distinctive flight to the base of a nearby tree is a good trait to watch for. It also has a very high pitched call that is distinctive.



### Eastern Bluebird

Uncommon

L 7"

Most Eastern Bluebirds head south for the winter. However, some will brave our winters and can survive if they can find open water, a supply of fruit, and cavities in which they can roost at night.

A heated bird bath is a good way to attract them in the winter. They will also use nest boxes as a roost and will often share a single box with a small flock.

This species' blue back and orange chest are easily recognized.



### American Robin

Uncommon

L 10"

Like it's cousin the Eastern Bluebird, the American Robin is mostly migratory but will sometimes attempt to overwinter in the Coulee Region. Like the Bluebird, the Robin switches to fruit during the winter and can be found on bushes and trees with a supply of small berries or other fruits. A preferred winter food are the berries of Hackberry trees.

Access to water is also important for their winter survival..

This species' dark grey back and orange chest are distinctive.





## European Starling

Common

L 8 1/2"

The European Starling is not native to North America. It was brought to the New World by European settlers and has flourished here.

It is a very round-looking mottled dark bird with short pointed wings and a prominent sharp-looking beak. It is often found around active farms where it finds spilled grain.

In the winter, it is often found in large flocks.



## Cedar Waxwing

Uncommon

L 7 1/4"

The Cedar Waxwing is a gorgeous light brown bird with a yellow belly and prominent crest and mask.

This species is very nomadic and moves regularly in search of small fruit and berries.

It is a good idea to take a close look at crab apple and other similar bushes and trees. If you are lucky, you might see a flock of Cedar Waxwings feasting on the berries.



## Lapland Longspur

Uncommon

L 6 1/4"

The Lapland Longspur is a bird that nests on the Arctic Tundra and is only found in the Coulee Region during the late fall, winter, and early spring.

It is often found on roadsides or on freshly spread manure in open farm fields. This is a bird that can be seen in huge flocks in some areas. In the Coulee Region, we usually only see a few along ridgetop roads in open farm country.

It is sparrow-sized and the male has a distinctive facial pattern .



## Snow Bunting

Uncommon

L 6 3/4"

The Snow Bunting is very similar to the Lapland Longspur and the Horned Lark in its habits. Like the Lapland Longspur, this species nests on the tundra very close to the Arctic Ocean.

It is a late fall, winter, and early spring visitor to the open areas of the Coulee Region. It can be found in mixed flocks with both other species.

When flushed, this species' prominent white patches on the top of the wings are a good field mark.





### American Tree Sparrow

Common

L 6 1/4"

The American Tree Sparrow is another northern species that is found in the late fall, winter, and very early spring in our area..

This species is also common along road sides and in fields with brushy edges. It is often found with Dark-eyed Juncos.

This bird has a distinctive two-one bill, a reddish cap and back with prominent white wing bars, and a large central spot on an otherwise clear whitish-gray chest.



### Song Sparrow

Uncommon

L 5 3/4 - 7 1/2"

The Song Sparrow is a very common summer nester in the Coulee Region and occasionally individuals will over-winter. When they do, they are usually found in brushy edges of open areas including marshes.

They are a reddish brown on top with a heavily streaked white belly. They have a prominent central spot on the chest and distinctive dark triangles on both sides of a white patch on the throat. They also have a relatively long tail.



### White-throated Sparrow

Uncommon

L 6 3/4"

The White-throated Sparrow is usually seen during migration as they head too and from their nesting range in the northern and boreal forests. Occasionally, an individual will stay over winter in our area, often in association with Dark-eyed Juncos and often near a well-stocked feeder. They usually head for heavy brush when spooked.

This bird can be recognized by its prominent stripes above the eye and distinctive white throat patch. The wings are very red in tone, and their breast and belly are clear of stripes.



### White-crowned Sparrow

Uncommon

L 7"

Another migrant that occasionally stays for the winter. In breeding plumage, this bird has prominent white and black stripes on the top of its head. However, in the winter, they usually look like the bird shown here with brown stripes on the top of the head. They lack the white patch at the throat of their cousin the White-throated Sparrow. They have slight white wing bars and a very clear gray breast and belly. Like the White-throated Sparrow, these are relatively large sparrows and will look larger than the Dark-eyed Juncos and other ground feeders that they hang out with.





## Dark-eyed Junco

Common

L 6 1/4"

The Dark-eyed Junco nests in the northern and boreal forests and is therefore only seen in the Coulee Region in the late fall, winter, and early spring. This species has several color forms found in various parts of its range. In the Midwest, we usually see the Slate-colored form shown in the picture on the left.

In the Slate colored form, the birds are dark grey above with a bright bright white belly and white feathers on the outside edge of the tail. The bird's eye is black and the bill is pink.



Oregon Form

Occasionally, we see individuals of other color forms in this area. The most common is the Oregon Form which is usually found in the Pacific Northwest.

Birds of this color form have a dark grey/black head and neck, a more brown back and light belly with some salmon color on the flanks. They also have white feathers on the outside edge of the tail and a bright pink beak like their more common Slate-colored friends.



Male

## Northern Cardinal

Common

L 8 3/4"

The Northern Cardinal is a common year-round resident of the Coulee Region and the male is one of the most recognized birds in the eastern part of the United States. It is a bright red bird that is a little smaller than a Robin with a distinctive crest, black mask, and red beak. The female is very similar, but more brown in tone.

Northern Cardinals are very common feeder birds and love large seeds like Black Sunflower seeds. They are more active in low light than many species and therefore are often among the first



Female

birds to show up at a feeder in the morning and are also among the last to leave in the evening.





Male



Female

## House Finch

Common

L 6"

The House Finch is actually a newcomer to the Coulee Region. Historically, this species was found in the far western part of the lower 48 states. About 50 years ago, some were released in New York City and that population has expanded westward to include our area where they are now year-round residents.

The House Finch and Purple Finch are similar in appearance and many people have trouble separating them. The males of both species have reddish or pinkish heads with brown backs.

The male House Finch is usually more red in tone. It also has distinct brown stripes on the flanks and belly. It also lacks the prominent dark brown mask through the eye that is seen in the male Purple Finch.

The female House Finch is grey brown in tone with very prominent brown streaking and the breast and belly. She lacks the prominent white line above the eye that is seen in the female Purple Finch.



Male



Female

## Purple Finch

Uncommon

L 6"

The Purple Finch is most common in our area in late fall and early spring. Most migrate to areas farther south but some stay through the entire winter.

This species is very similar to the House Finch shown at the top of the page.

For males, notice the chest and belly of the Purple Finch shows only light streaking and shows a gradual shift from dark pink at the top of the chest to white at the base of the tail. The pink on

the back extends all of the way from the base of the beak to the base of the tail. They also have an indistinct dark mask that covers the eye and cheek.

The female is more chocolate brown in tone than the female House Finch. Her prominent white stripe above the dark cheek patch makes her easier to differentiate than a male.

Like the House Finch, Purple Finches are seed eaters and have large beaks designed to crush large seeds.





Male



Female

## Common Redpoll

Uncommon

L 5 1/4"

Common Redpolls are native to taiga. They are seed eaters and can be displaced in large numbers in years where the seed crop in the north is poor. During those years, they "irrupt" to the south and can be found in good numbers in the Driftless Area and other parts of Wisconsin.

This species gets its name from the prominent red cap on the bird's forehead. The word poll is an old English word for cap. They have a sharply pointed yellow bill that is used to probe for

seeds.

Both the males and females are darker on top with a mottled brown extending from the back of the head to the base of the tail. They have dark wings with a single white wing bar and a deeply forked tail.

The male Common Redpoll is usually more white in tone and not as heavily streaked on the underside. He often shows a pink blush on the upper chest and the belly can be pure white.

The female is more brown in tone, but still shows the prominent red cap.



## Pine Siskin

Uncommon

L 5"

The Pine Siskin is another northern finch that irrupts into our area when there are low numbers of pine cones in the northern and boreal forests.

It is a very brown little finch with a very streaked belly and very sharply pointed beak. It often shows a yellow tint in the flight feathers on the wing as well as in the tail. It is a small bird that is markedly smaller than other finches that it often associates with.

It has a deeply forked tail and a rising, "ZREEEEE" call.





Winter Male

## American Goldfinch

Common

L 5"

The American Goldfinch is a year-round resident of the Coulee Region. In its breeding plumage, the bright yellow male with its black cap, black wings with a bright white wing bar, and black tail are very recognizable.

However, in the winter, this bird is much more dull in its appearance. Instead of being bright yellow, it has a brownish green back, light colored belly, and can have a yellow tint to the face.



Breeding Male

The solid black wings with bright white wing bar as well as the black tail are still present.

This bird is very common at feeders and loves black sunflower seeds and thistle seed.



Male

## House Sparrow

Common

L 6 1/4"

The House Sparrow is another bird that is not native to North America. It was introduced from Europe in the 1800s and expanded its range to include much of both North and South America.

This bird has developed an ability to live close to humans. They are common in urban and rural areas and are often considered a nuisance since they nest in nooks and crannies of buildings.

In rural areas, they are often found on active farms. There, they



Female

readily eat spilled grain and feed.

Although they are called House Sparrows, they are actually a weaver finch and have the large finch bill to prove it.

The male is reddish brown on top and light grey underneath. They have a black mask and bill that varies in its extension from season to season. It is less prominent in the winter.

The female is a very large sparrow sized bird that is fairly nondescript. Its belly is clear and the back a mottled brown.

They are often found in large flocks when present and like to roost and rest in dense bushes.



Definition of Data and Terms on the ID pages:

The status specified for each species is for the winter season only.

L = Length of bird in Inches

W=Wingspan in Inches



