



June 2022 Article – Bird ID

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Have you ever wanted to know what bird was making that loud call out your window every morning at 0-dark hundred when you were still trying to sleep? Or, what those tiny unidentifiable birds flitting around in the top of the trees were called?

Summer is an ideal time to learn how to identify birds. You may be thinking, “Why not spring? There are many more birds around then.” Well, that is the problem – there are **too many** birds around at that time for beginning birders to start the learning process.

Waiting until after the spring migration is over and birds have settled into their nesting and rearing locations makes beginning identification much easier. Studies show that people have to hear something 3 to 7 times in order to remember.

So, having the same birds in the same locations on a regular basis provides the opportunity to attain that required repetition to inscribe it into our human brains.

But how and where to begin?

Twenty years ago, the go-to resources were ID books and Field Guides by people like Roger Tory Peterson, National Audubon Society, Kenn Kaufman, David Allen Sibley, National Geographic, Golden Guides, and so forth.

All of these books are still very valuable and highly recommended. However, science and technology have been hatching up some new resources.

Conveniently, most of the printed ID books and Field Guides mentioned before are now available on-line and have associated apps with easy-to-use tools available for both novice and advanced birders. Some of the apps available at your finger-tips include: Peterson Birds Field App, Audubon Guides Bird, Sibley eGuide, National Geographic's BirdsEye, iBird Pro Birding, eBird, and Merlin.

Some of these apps are for more advanced birders and do have fees, so check out several before making any purchases.

However, my favorite free app for beginning birders from the list above is Merlin. This is one of several apps produced by The Cornell Lab, Cornell University. It helps beginners learn birds by sight and sound.

I had my twelve-year old daughter try out the Merlin app in our backyard and she loved it. Recently, she came running up to me smiling and laughing, and said, "Mom! Mom! We have a loon! A Common Loon!" She played back the recording. I laughed. The recording was from one of our chickens that was following her around the yard.

So, technology is advancing considerably, but still fallible. It is always a good idea to double-check with other sources to confirm the identification is correct.

Challenge yourself to learn twenty birds this summer by sight and sound.

Begin your birding in areas where you are likely to go on a regular basis. This may include places like your yard, a park, or a golf course that are quiet enough to hear bird calls and not overly distracting.

Once you have trained yourself how to listen and observe birds, you will be ready for more challenging situations... like spring migration! Many of the Seneca Parks are full of warblers and other spring migrants in late April and May. So, learn the trails and current summer-time birds at places like Garlo Heritage Nature Preserve, Forrest Nature Preserve, Fruth Wetland Nature Preserve, Steyer Nature Preserve, and others so you are ready to add to your list when migration begins again.

For information on Seneca Parks locations and upcoming programming, please visit the Seneca Parks website at [www.SenecaCountyParks.com](http://www.SenecaCountyParks.com).