

Bird Songs and Calls of the Western Upper Peninsula

Compiled from Course Notes by
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Many of our smaller birds have voices that may be described with words of syllabifications for easy identification. The following list of songs and calls should help you identify most (but certainly, not all) of the birds most commonly encountered in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan. For further details consult Peterson's Eastern Field Guide, the Audubon Bird Guides by R.M. Pough, Bent's Life Histories, and, best of all, the recordings.

Killdeer	"killdeer, killdeer, killdeer. . ." loud and repetitious
American Woodcock	"peent" call given on the ground between courtship flights where a twittering sound is made by the wings
Spotted Sandpiper	"peet-weet" in long fast series
Mourning Dove	"ooah, cooo, cooo, coo"; sounds hollow and doleful
Barred Owl	"who cooks for you, who cooks for you all"; the "all" is lower pitched and drawn out
Whip-poor-will	"whip-poor-weel"; accents on 1st and last syllables, repeated endlessly at night
Common Nighthawk	"zeep, zeep"; a nasal and buzzy note given at intervals as it hunts high in the air - similar but more raspy than woodcock's "peent"
Belted Kingfisher	a loud rattle, often in flight
Common Flicker	"flicka, flicka, flicka, flicka, flicka", loud and sharp; also a loud piercing call like a slice in the air - "teeuw"
Pileated Woodpecker	"kuk, kuk, kuk, kuk, kuk, kuk"; like a flicker call but <u>louder</u> and more <u>hesitant</u> and laugh-like. Another call is faster and more ringing than Flicker's with pitch rising or falling at end
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	"keeyew" and other squeaking and mewling calls, drumming is irregularly timed, taps often slowing down at the end of a series
Great Crested Flycatcher	Loud raucous "wreep" from the woods; whistle-like with rising inflection "pweee"
Eastern Phoebe	"fee-be" nasal with the 2nd syllable alternately higher (or lower) pitched than the first
Least Flycatcher	Emphatic "che-bek" with 2nd syllable accented

¹ Based on University of Michigan Camp Filbert Roth Ornithology notes, Spring 1980.

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Eastern Wood Pewee	“pee-a-wee”; a drawling whistle, slurred down then up irregularly alternating with “pee’ur”, slurred down
Olive-sided Flycatcher	A whistled “hic — three-beers”, 2nd note highest accent
Common Raven	Loud, rough croaks
Common Crow	“caw, caw, caw”, often in flight
Black-capped Chickadee	“chick-a-dee-dee-dee”; busy call notes, 1 st note highest; song is a whistled “spring-soon”, the second note a full tone lower than the 1st
Boreal Chickadee	“chick-che-day-day” or “sic-a-doo-doo”, slurred downwards, more wheezy and drawling than Black-capped
White-breasted Nuthatch	“what, what, what, what” or “yank, yank”, very nasal
Red-breasted Nuthatch	“ank, ank” or “neep, neep”, very nasal, higher and more drawn out than White-breasted
Long-billed Marsh Wren	“cut cut turrrrr”, ready like an old sewing machine
Short-billed Marsh Wren	“chap-chap-chap-chap”, like 2 stones clicking together
House Wren	Stuttering, gurgling song, rising in musical burst, then falling at the end
Winter Wren	Loud, long sustained, rapid succession of high tinkling warbles and trills, often ending very high. <u>Longest song of any bird</u>
Gray Catbird	Cat-like meows; mimic songs, each given once <u>in pairs</u>
Brown Thrasher	Mimicking notes and phrases in pairs
American Robin	“cheer-up, cheerily, cheerily, cheer-up”, whistled and caroling with breaks between phrases
Wood Thrush	Flutelike phrases with a trill here and there
Hermit Thrush	Clear, flutelike, ethereal in the evening; long clear introductory note, phrases on different pitch
Veery	Song a weird liquid whistle wheeling <u>downward</u> “vee-ur, vee-ur, veer, veer”, usually given at dusk; call note “chow”
Swainson's Thrush	Liquid whistle spiraling <u>upward</u>
Eastern Bluebird	Gurgling “cheer cheerful charmer”
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	“see'see'see*see, here'here'here, look-at-me, look-at-me, look-at-me”
Golden-crowned Kinglet	High thin “see-see-see” rising, then dropping to chickadee-like chatter

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Cedar Waxwing	Call a high and lispy-"see" <u>often given in flight</u>
Red-eyed Vireo	"going up, going down, going up, going down"; given many times a minute (elevator birds)
Solitary Vireo	Like Red-eyed, but more drawn out and slurred
Warbling Vireo	Long rising warble similar to Purple Finch but with the upward snap at the end; quick and run together, with no trills
Black and White Warbler	"pizza, pizza, pizza, pizza"; usually repeated 7 times, high thin, like sucking in air
Blackburnian Warbler	"weetsa, weetsa, weetsa"; lower pitched than Black and White
Nashville Warbler	"seebit, seebit, seebit", followed by a trill
Norther Parula Warbler	"zzzzzip", rising in pitch with snap at end (zipper bird)
Yellow Warbler	"sweet, sweet, sweet, summer, sweet", with summer lower pitched than sweets
Magnolia Warbler	"willy, willy, wee'o" or "soo-eet, soo-eet, soo-eet"
Cape May Warbler	"seee, seee, seee, seee", very high pitched, usually 4 or more
Black-throated Blue Warbler	"zur, zree, zree"; buzzy, sustained on the zur, zrees on different pitch
Golden-winged Warbler	"phee buzz buzz"; buzzy, more sustained and lower on the buzzes
Yellow-rumped Warbler	"wees, wees, wees, wees, wees", often with a higher or lower pitched ending
Black-throated Green Warbler	"zee, zee, zee, zu-zee" or "zee, zee, zu-zu,
Chestnut-sided Warbler	zee"; zus lower pitched
Pine Warbler	"pleased, pleased, pleased ta meet chew" or "sweet, sweet, sweet, I switch you"
Palm Warbler	Trill like Chipping Sparrow but looser and slower "thi, thi, thi, thi, thi.thi", weak chipping series
Ovenbird	"cher* tea-cher-tea-cher-tea-cher-teach"; rising in volume
Northern Waterthrush	"twit twit twee twee chew chew chew" rapid, each pair or triplet given at a lower pitch than the proceeding
Mourning Warbler	"chirry chirry chirry cherry cherry", pitch dropping on cherries
Common Yellowthroat	"witchity, witchity, witchity-witch"

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Canada Warbler	“click, turn-it-on, turn-it-off”
Connecticut Warbler	“sweet sugar sweet sugar sweet” or “can you dig it, can you dig it, can you dig it”
American Redstart	“tsee tsee tsee tseet” (last note higher), “tsee tsee tsee tsee tsee-o” (drop on last syllable); “teetsa testse testea teetsa teet”, often alternates all three songs
Bobolink	Reedy, bubbling, usually given in flight
Eastern Meadowlark	“tee-yah, tee-yair”, clear downward slurred whistles
Western Meadowlark	Flutelike, gurgling, 7-10 notes
Red-winged Blackbird	Call note a loud “check”
Northern Oriole	(Baltimore type) a clear whistled “here, here, here, right here dear”
Common Grackle	“schlitz” and a variety of squeaky calls
Brown-headed Cowbird	Liquid “glug-glug-gleee” or “zeeee-purr” .
Scarlet Tanager	Robin-like song but hoarse, call note “chuck-burr”
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Robin-like but with phrases run together and more rolling “petit greet, petit greer”
Indigo Bunting	“sweet sweet, where where, here, here, see it, see it...”; each pair on a different pitch
Evening Grosbeak	Unglamourously similar to House Sparrow chirping, but more drawn out
Purple Finch	Long rich warbling similar to Warbling Vireo, but trills often present
American Goldfinch	“per-chickory” given <u>at each dip in flight</u> , like a canary
Pine Siskin	Similar to Northern Parula but heavy duty zipper
Rufous-sided Towhee	“drink your teeee”, last syllable high and trilling; call “chewink”
Savannah Sparrow	“tsit'tsit'tsit'tseee-tsaay tsickit” or “I'm so laaaazy”, last note lower pitch
Vesper Sparrow	Like Song Sparrow but starts with 2 low, then 2 high notes and trills more buzzy
Dark-eyed Junco	Like Chipping Sparrow but slower, more metallic
Clay-colored Sparrow	Very low electrical “buzz buzz”, like a bee inside a bag

Field Sparrow	Like spinning a quarter on a table
Chipping Sparrow	A chipping trill on one pitch
White-throated Sparrow	"O sweet Canada, Canada, Canada, Canada" or "ol Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody", 1st note higher or lower
Swamp Sparrow	Like a loud, slow, musical Chipping Sparrow trill
Song Sparrow	Varied series of chirps, trills, and other notes, very hard to describe but distinctive