



WILDLIFE HABITAT EDUCATION PROGRAM (WHEP)

Lesson 2: Birds of Iowa

REVIEW TIME!





American robin

General information

American robins use a wide assortment of vegetation types, from mowed grassy areas to forested areas. In urban areas, robins use large open areas and nearby trees and shrubs. Parks, golf courses, and lawns in residential areas are attractive to robins. They are found throughout North America, though they may migrate out of northern latitudes during winters with sustained cold and snow. Robins build a nest of grass and mud on a tree or shrub limb, but will occasionally nest on building ledges. Robins spend considerable time on the ground feeding on earthworms, but also will perch on branches to eat berries, fruit, and insects.

Habitat requirements

Diet: insects and worms during spring and summer; soft mast from shrubs and trees in winter; seldom use artificial feeders

Water: require water daily in warm seasons; obtain water from low-lying areas, ponds, and rain-filled gutters

Cover: shrubs, evergreen trees, and deciduous trees used for nesting and escape; evergreen trees often used for early nests

Wildlife management practices

Control Nonnative Invasive Vegetation: when nonnative invasive vegetation begins to reduce habitat quality for American robins

Plant Shrubs: where soft mast is lacking; examples might include dogwoods, hollies, golden currant, and winterberry

Plant Trees: both deciduous and evergreen; where nesting sites may be limiting

Set-back Succession: *Prescribed Fire, Disking, and Mowing* can be used to set-back succession and provide suitable structure for robins; *Mowing* may be used to maintain foraging and loafing cover for robins in **Urban** areas

Water Developments for Wildlife: birdbaths and pans of water can be provided in urban areas; do not place water in areas where cats can catch the birds; cats should be removed

Wildlife or Fish Survey: observation counts and point counts are used to estimate trends in populations



Lee Karmey



Wildlife challenge: ID animal based on a specimen (wing, skull, tail feathers, study skin, etc.), photograph, or call

Wildlife Management Plan: Know habitat needs & how to provide them (specific WMPs). May also need range & movement patterns.

American robin

General information

American robins use a wide assortment of vegetation types, from mowed grassy areas to forested areas. In urban areas, robins use large open areas and nearby trees and shrubs. Parks, golf courses, and lawns in residential areas are attractive to robins. They are found throughout North America, though they may migrate out of northern latitudes during winters with sustained cold and snow. Robins build a nest of grass and mud on a tree or shrub limb, but will occasionally nest on building ledges. Robins spend considerable time on the ground feeding on earthworms, but also will perch on branches to eat berries, fruit, and insects.



Lee Karney

Habitat requirements

Diet: insects and worms during spring and summer; soft mast from shrubs and trees in winter; seldom use artificial feeders

Water: require water daily in warm seasons; obtain water from low-lying areas, ponds, and rain-filled gutters

Cover: shrubs, evergreen trees, and deciduous trees used for nesting and escape; evergreen trees often used for early nests

Wildlife management practices

Control Nonnative Invasive Vegetation: when nonnative invasive vegetation begins to reduce habitat quality for American robins

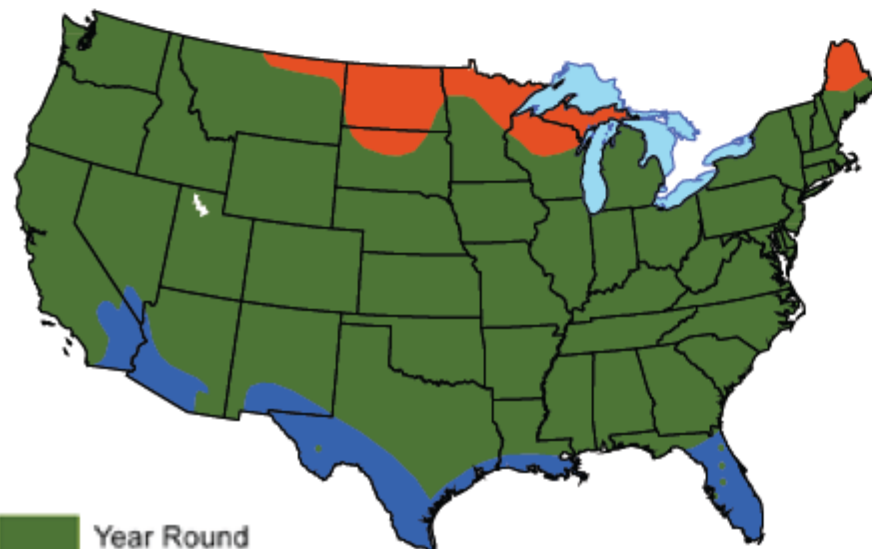
Plant Shrubs: where soft mast is lacking; examples might include dogwoods, hollies, golden currant, and winterberry

Plant Trees: both deciduous and evergreen; where nesting sites may be limiting

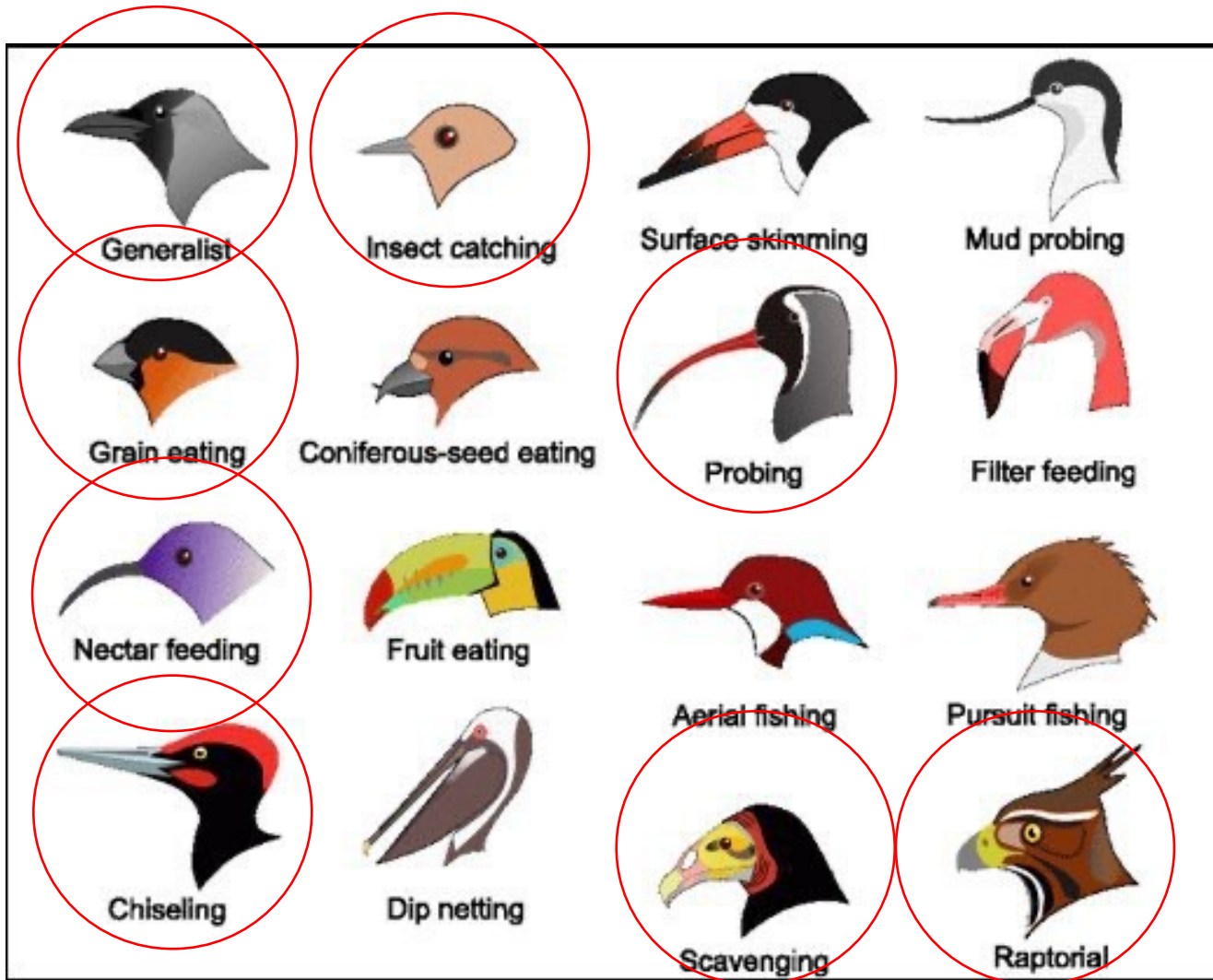
Set-back Succession: *Prescribed Fire, Disking, and Mowing* can be used to set-back succession and provide suitable structure for robins; *Mowing* may be used to maintain foraging and loafing cover for robins in ***Urban*** areas

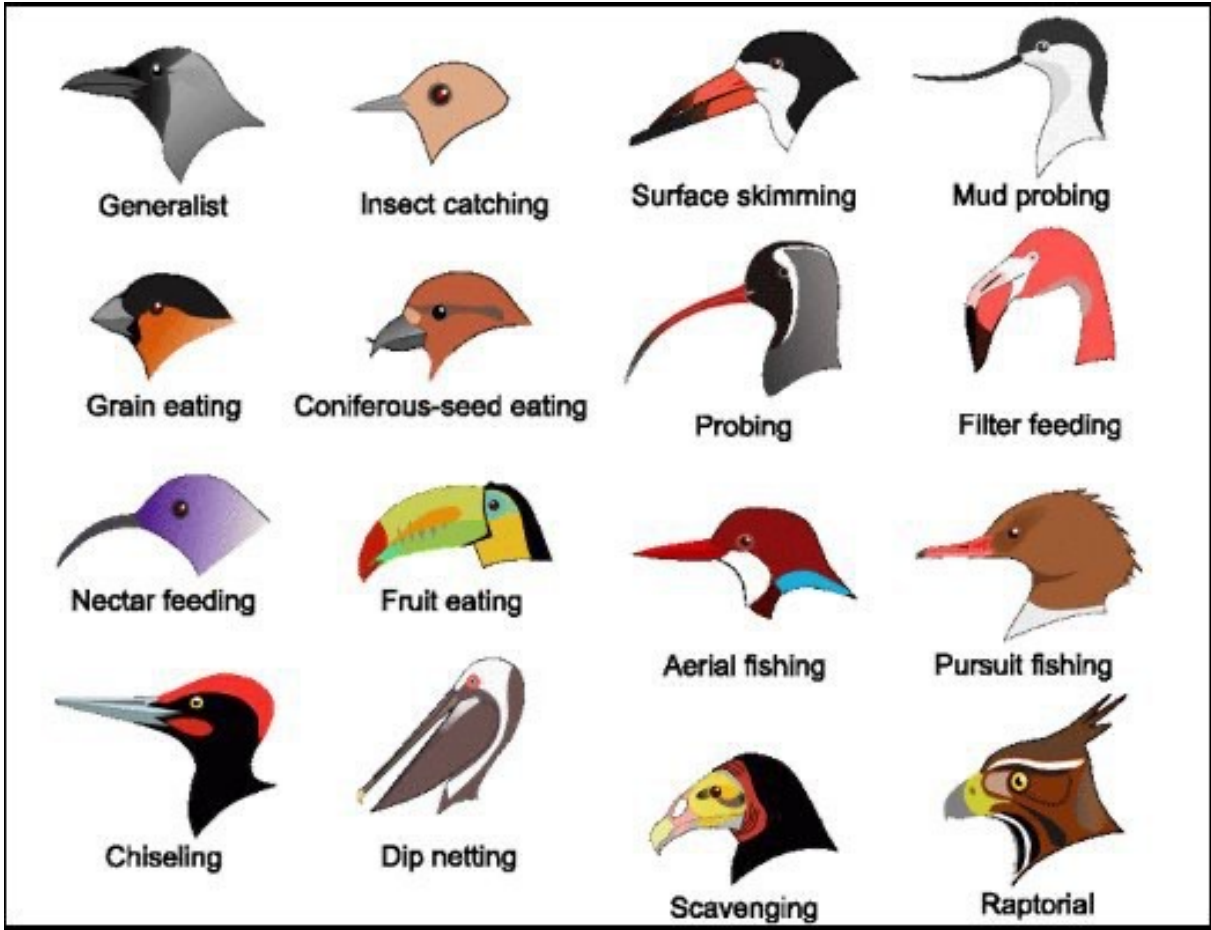
Water Developments for Wildlife: birdbaths and pans of water can be provided in urban areas; do not place water in areas where cats can catch the birds; cats should be removed

Wildlife or Fish Survey: observation counts and point counts are used to estimate trends in populations



- Year Round
- Summer
- Winter
- Migratory





DUCKS & GEESE

Generally nest on ground

Need water source

How does bill shape affect feeding?

Diet: aquatic plants, seeds and sometimes grains or hard mast, insects

Webbed feet used for _____.



SONGBIRDS: PIGEONS, WRENS, SPARROWS, ROBINS, BLUEBIRDS, ETC

Generally nest in trees, rooftops,
hollows, birdhouses

Beak shape, size shows food source

- Can songbirds eat squirrels?

Diet: Seeds, insects, soft mast

Water source: is it always needed?

Feet: grip on to trees



RAPTORS: HAWKS, OWLS, FALCONS, EAGLES

Generally nest in trees, ledges

Knifelike beak

- Do they eat seeds?

Diet: Mammals, rodents, birds, insects,
fish

Feet & talons



NEST PARASITISM

❖ Bird lays egg in other bird's nest, lets other bird raise young as its own

❖ Redhead

❖ Why?



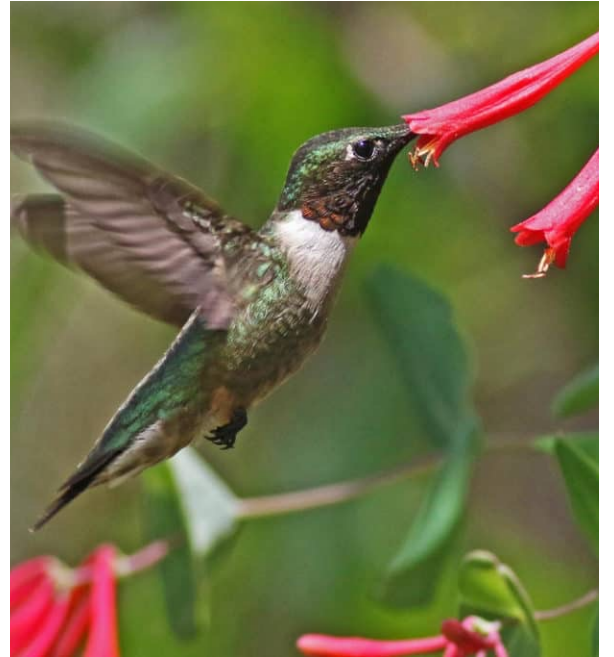
WHERE DO I NEST?



Ecoregion Map



- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Southeast Mixed and Outer Coastal Plain Forest | Shortgrass Prairie | Pacific Coastal Forest |
| Eastern Deciduous Forest | Intermountain | Hot Desert |
| Northeast Mixed Forest | Prairie Brushland | Mediterranean Zone |
| Tallgrass/Mixed Prairie | Woodland | |



LOCATION SHAPES CREATURES!

Evolved to match area & surrounding species

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

Flat to rolling plains with cold winters & hot summers. 20- 40 inches average annual precipitation.

Vegetation: tall grasses & forbs (wildflowers) with few shrubs & trees

Contains large areas of cropland. Many areas grazed by livestock.

Succession Stages:

1. Annual forbs and grasses
2. Perennial grasses and forbs
3. Woody species, such as juniper, osage orange, and elms.
Shrubs and trees dominate riparian areas and other sufficiently moist areas that can support woody vegetation.



PRAIRIE BIRDS

Often more ground-dwelling (turkey, pheasant, greater prairie chicken, bobwhite)

May build nest on ground in grasses using dead leaves, grass, etc

Water from diet (except mourning dove and blue-winged teal)

Cover: grasslands or shrubs

Diet: mainly insects and seeds, except northern harrier (carnivorous)



URBAN ECOREGION

An area with many people

Ecosystems may be fragmented by roads and buildings

Often dominated by nonnative invasive vegetation



URBAN BIRDS

Most need freestanding water

Many cavity nesters

Wide range of diets—some eat garbage, cat food, human handouts (only available in urban areas)



WETLANDS

Bodies of water, and the transition areas between water and land

Aquatic vegetation & trees

Succession Stages:

1. Deep water with little vegetation
2. Shallow water with lots of submerged and floating aquatic vegetation
3. Very shallow water or wet ground dominated by emergent aquatic vegetation
4. Ground becomes drier and dominated by upland vegetation similar to surrounding area



WETLAND BIRDS

Rely on water, adapted for life near and/or in water and accompanying dense vegetation

Beaks: scoop-like OR tweezer-like

- Scoopers: aquatic plants, aquatic insects, hard mast, grains & seeds
- Tweezers: invertebrates—worms & insects, snails, sometimes small fish or frogs



REVIEW

Birds...

- are shaped by location
- Have commonalities: ducks & geese, raptors, songbirds

Nesting behaviors: parasitism, locations, etc

NEXT TIME

Will learn about mammals, amphibians, reptiles

Review today's content

On birds handout: write one fact about each bird in the "other" box. This can be nesting fact, migration, or other habit.

Check out WHEP resources on Tama County website:

https://www.tamacounty.iowa.gov/conservation/whep_resources/