

# A WOODLAND GARDEN

By Dan Willis

Over the years the woodland garden has matured and developed new character. The trees have grown larger and the shrubs more rambling. The visits from some types of wildlife have increase while others have decrease. A regular visitor is a doe that has given birth to a fawn in the heavily wooded front yard for three consecutive years. The doe and her fawn are cute but they really enjoy eating the hostas, hydrangeas, flowers and other plants.



Each spring is witness to the annual visit of a mating pairs of pileated and red-headed woodpeckers; barn, screech, long-eared, and short-eared owls; and red-tail, red-shoulder, and rough-legged hawks. Other regular visitors blue herons, cowbirds, grackles, blue jays, cat birds, red-wing blackbirds, and robins.



During the 2012-2013 seasons, I have recorded and verified the identity of 30 different bird species that have visited my woodland garden birdfeeders. Many more birds were will-o-the-wisp sightings and the species could not be positively identified.

## Cardinal:

It is easily recognized by the male's bright red with crest, black face, and stout red bill. The female is buff-brown tinged with red on the crest, wings, and tail. The birds come to seeds and suet in birdfeeders and are particularly partial to black sunflower seeds. L= 8-9"



## Eastern Bluebird:

The male has a bright, entirely blue back, rusty throat and breast, and a white belly and undertail covets. Females and juveniles have a white ring around the eye and blue in the wings and tail. This is the only bluebird found east of the Great Plains. This beautiful bird is a favorite of many people. L= 7"



### Rufous-sided Towhee:

The Towhee has rufous sides, white belly, and a long rounded tail with white edging on the outer feathers. The female differs from the male only by replacing the black with brown. Both the male and female have red eyes. Towhees often feed on the ground, scratching in dry leaves. It is seen regularly at the seed and suet feeders. L= 7-8½”



### Eastern Phoebe:

The Eastern Phoebe has a dark head, solid black bill, and a tail-wagging habit. The adults lack wing bars. Its name also comes from its call of “fee-be.” It arrives in early spring and departs in late fall. Its primary food source is insects but in the winter it eats berries. It can be seen at seed and suet feeders. L= 5¾-7”



### Yellow-Shafted Flicker:

The Flicker is Jay sized and commonly found in woodlands. The undersurface of the wing and tail feathers is golden. The black “mustache” is present except in females. The nape of the neck is always red. In the East, flickers are the only brown-backed woodpeckers that commonly feed on the ground, searching for insects. They are regular visitors to the seed and suet feeders. L= 10-12”



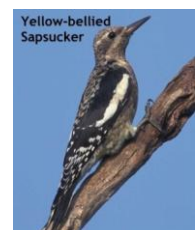
### Red-Bellied Woodpecker:

This woodpecker is common in southeastern swampy woodlands. It is barred black and white ladder-back with pale buff below and on the face. The male has a red crown and nape while the female has only a red nape. It is beneficial bird that consumes large numbers of wood-boring beetles as well as grasshoppers, ants, and other insects. They are fond of acorns and are frequently seen at birdfeeders. L= 8½-12”



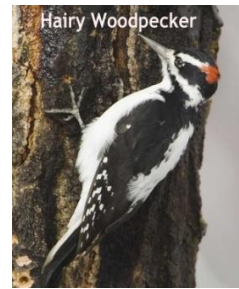
### Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker:

This species is common but one of the quietest of the woodpeckers. The plumage is variable but the narrow longitudinal wing stripe and finely mottle back is used for identification. Sapsuckers get their name from their habit of boring parallel rows of small holes into bark of trees. They also feed on seeds and suet at birdfeeders. L= 7½”-8½”



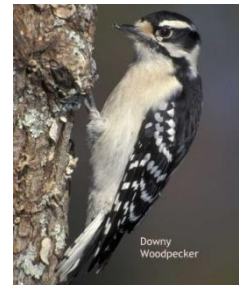
### Hairy Woodpecker:

The Hairy Woodpecker, a robin-sized woodpecker, is a common bird found in mature forest. This black and white woodpecker is recognized by the vertical white stripe on the back and its long bill. It feeds on many harmful insects, such as wood-boring beetles. They also feed on seeds and suet at birdfeeders. L= 7½”-9”



### Downy Woodpecker:

The commonest of woodpeckers looks like a miniature Hairy Woodpecker. It is recognized by its barred outer tail feathers and short, slender bill. The male is larger than the female and chisels deep into wood whereas the female pries under the bark. As such, the woodpeckers are able to share the food resources without competing with one another. It feeds on seed and suet at birdfeeders. L= 5¾”-6”



### White-Breasted Nuthatch:

It has a blue-gray back, white underbody and face, and solid black cap. Except for the white throat, it is sparrow-sized and resembles chickadees in plumage, though not in shape and actions. It is characteristic of nuthatches to be seen creeping on tree trunks, head downwards, stopping, and then looking around with head held out at a 90-degree angle. They are familiar visitors to birdfeeders. L= 5-6”



### Brown-Headed Nuthatch:

The Brown-Headed Nuthatch is smaller than a sparrow and the only eastern one with a dull brown cap. The underbody is whitish and has whitish spot on its nape. They are quite agile and restless, flitting from one cluster of pine needles to another. They are seen at seed and suet feeders. L=4-5”



### Myrtle Warbler (Yellow-Rumped Warbler):

This is the only white-throated, yellow-rumped warbler with a yellow cap. Yellow side patches are always present. It is common during the winter and migration seasons and is the only warbler that regularly spends the winter in the northern states. It will feed on seeds and suet at birdfeeders. L= 4¾”-6”



### Cerulean Warbler:

It is the only sky blue-backed, white-throated warbler. The adult males have a thin black throat band across a white breast. They are common in open, deciduous woodlands and near streams. They feed on seeds and suet at birdfeeders. This species has been considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act. L= 4-4½”



### Prothonotary Warbler:

The golden head and plain blue-gray wings with no wing bars and white spots in the tail distinguish this seldom seen bird. It has a long dark bill and white in and under the tail. It is rare in Southern woodlands but seldom seen far from a stream. It will feed on seeds and suet at birdfeeders. L= 4¾”-5½”



### American Goldfinch:

The breeding male is bright yellow with a white rump, black cap, black wings and tail. It is smaller than a sparrow. The male changes plumage in winter to resemble the female. Since the goldfinch depends mainly on weed seeds, nesting does not begin until midsummer to late summer. They are fond of thistles, sunflowers, and dandelions. They feed on seeds and suet at birdfeeders. L=4¼-5”



### Carolina Chickadee:

This is a fairly common in deciduous woodlands and residential areas. It is similar to the northern Black-capped Chickadee, but feathers of folded wing usually show a gray edging and the lower edge of black bib is more sharply defined than that of Black-capped. The Carolina Chickadee is a familiar visitor to birdfeeders. L=4-5”



### Black-Capped Chickadee:

This is a common species found in deciduous and mixed forests, open woodlands and suburban areas in winter. It has a black cap and throat. It has white cheek patches, gray back, and dull white underbody. The wing feathers narrowly and indistinctly edged with white. Flocks of this inquisitive bird often appear at the birdfeeder with striking regularity. L=4¾-5¾



### Pine Siskins:

They have a sharply notched tail, heavily streaked breasts, and small patches of yellow in wings and tail, and a short, conical bill. Smaller than purple finches and with habits similar to goldfinches. They feed on seeds and suet at birdfeeders. L= 4¼-5”



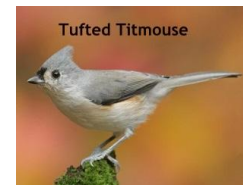
### Brown Thrasher:

Its breast is rufous-brown above and white below with dark brown streaks. It has a long tail and yellow eyes. They are often confused with thrushes but have streaked rather than spotted breast. They often feed on the ground, scattering dead leaves with their beaks as they search for insects. Often found feeding on the ground and at birdfeeders, as shown in the photograph. L= 11½”



### Tufted Titmouse:

The largest of the North American titmouse and is common along streams in deciduous woodlands of the Southeast. They are gray above and whitish below, with rust-colored sides and a conspicuous gray crest. It often clings to the bark of trees and turns upside down to pick spiders and insects from the underside of a twig or leaf. They are frequent visitors at birdfeeders feeding on seeds and suet. L= 6”



### Purple Finch:

The wine-colored or rose-red male extends from upperparts to breast and flanks, being brightest at its crown and rump. The lower breast is off-white, brown wings and a brown notched tail. Female resembles a sparrow except for the heavier beak and has a light stripe behind eye, dark stripe on the jaw, and a heavily streaked breast. They visit feeding stations in the winter for seeds and suet. L=5½-6½”



### House Wren:

The plainest of wrens it is commonly found in residential areas, city parks, farmlands, and woodland edges. It is a tiny bird with a short tail that is often cocked over the back. It is dusky brown above, paler below, with not distinctive markings. Usually feeds on the ground below birdfeeders or occasionally at seed and suet birdfeeders. L= 4½-5¼”



### Carolina Wren:

It is the largest of the eastern wrens and is identified by its conspicuous white eyebrow, rufous back, and bright buff brown underbody. They frequently are found in brush piles and old wooden buildings. It can be found feeding on the ground below birdfeeders and at seed and suet feeders. L= 5½”



### Slated-colored Junco:

The Eastern male or "Slate-colored Junco" is dark slate-gray on head, upper breast, flanks, and upperparts, with white lower breast and belly. It has a pink bill and dark gray tail with white outer tail feathers conspicuous in flight. It usually habitats are openings and edges of coniferous and mixed woods, fields, roadsides, parks, and suburban gardens where it feeds on seeds and small fruits. It can be seen below but seldom on birdfeeders. L= 5-6¼”



### Song Sparrows:

The Song Sparrow is abundant, diverse, and geographically variable. There are at least 34 subspecies in the family. These birds have a heavily streaked breast with a prominent central spot. They have a relatively long, rounded tail which they pump in flight. They are frequent visitors to birdfeeders. L=5-7”



### Field Sparrow:

This is again a very common bird found in abandoned farms and pastures overgrown with tall grass, weeds, and scattered saplings. It is recognized by its bright pink bill and legs, unstreaked buff breast rufous cap, white eye ring, and lack of dark eye line. They are frequent visitors at birdfeeders feeding on seeds and suet. L= 5¼”



### Fox Sparrow:

Commonly found in dense conifer thickets and deciduous brush. It is a chubby, large sparrow recognized by its heavily streaked underbody and its bright orange-brown rump and slightly notched rust-colored tail. Like the Song Sparrow, it has a central large brown breast spot. It feeds by scratching, towhee-fashion, with both feet. L= 6-7½”



### Vesper Sparrow:

It is fairly common in meadows, pastures, and hay or grain fields. It is distinguished from other brown sparrows by the white outer feathers of its notched tail and a narrow white eye ring. They are frequent visitors at birdfeeders feeding on seeds and suet. L= 5-6½”



### Mourning Dove:

The Mourning Dove has a slim body and long tapered tail color is mostly a sandy buff with a white underbody. There are black spots on the wings. They will eat almost exclusively seeds, such as corn, millet, pine nuts, sweetgum seeds and sunflower seeds, but rarely insects. Surprisingly, they seem to quickly learn to feed directly at the birdfeeder. L= 10½-12”



### Ruby-Throated Humming Bird:

These are the smallest of North American birds. They have long slender bills and a bright iridescent red throat. Their backs and crown are emerald or golden-green with gray-white breast. They are attracted to tubular flowers like the trumpet creeper and Rose-of-Sharon. Hummers are attracted to artificial feeders with red glass tubes filled with sweet liquid. L= 3½”



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