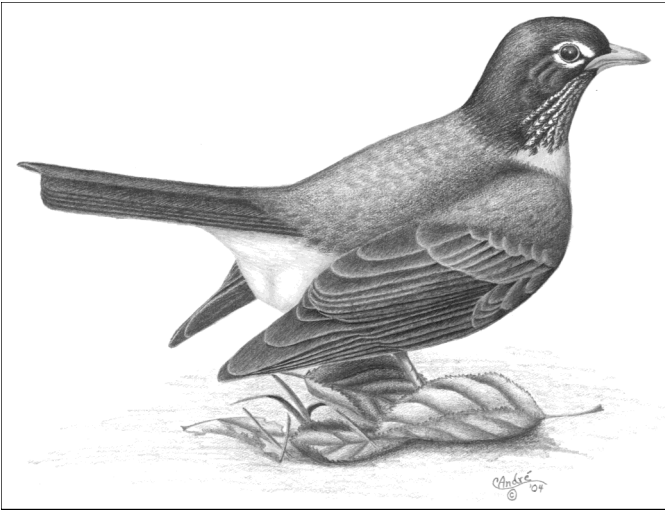


SPECIES PROFILE



Šišoka⁹
American Robin
Turdus migratorius

American Robins leave no doubt that they've arrived in spring because they will hang like Christmas ornaments from the crabapple tree in the front yard until the fruit is gone. Robins were the most commonly observed bird in our survey. They'll nest everywhere from the lilac bushes by the shed to the forgotten flower pots stacked beside the garage.

IDENTIFICATION. American Robins exhibit slight **sexual dichromatism** in that females are slightly duller than males overall.^{6,10} Adults are gray-brown on the back, rump, and wings, and have a darker head and tail. They have white crescents above and below the eyes, a streaked white chin, and white lower belly. Males especially have a brick red breast, and yellow legs and bill. Robins are approximately 10 inches long.¹⁰ The males' song is often rendered as *cheerily, cheer up, cheer up, cheerily, cheer up*. Females and males have several calls, and the most common is *chirp, chuck, cuck* often delivered as an alarm call.¹⁰

DISTRIBUTION. American Robins breed throughout Minnesota and most of North America and into Mexico (see inset map, opposite page).¹⁰ Their breeding area has increased with establishment of farmland, homesteads, and suburban areas.¹⁰ Their wintering range can extend as far north as most of the lower 48 U.S. states and into Mexico.¹⁰ Some birds never move far from breeding areas.^{6,10}

MIGRATION. The species name "*migratorius*" means wandering as well as migratory,¹⁰ and robins live up to their name. In spring, migrants arrive in early March through late May.⁴ Fall migration occurs late August through late November.⁴ Some birds never leave Minnesota depending on winter severity and the fruit crop.⁴ Stragglers stay in flocks and wander throughout forested areas in search of wild fruit.^{6,10} Robins primarily migrate in flocks during the day.¹⁰

HABITAT. American Robins frequent sparsely wooded and shrubby areas where they forage in lawns, short grass, and bare areas.^{6,10}

FOOD HABITS. Robins mainly consume invertebrates and fruit. They generally feed on the ground and they use either a roaming foraging or a sit-and-wait strategy.⁷ Much of their spring diet consists of soft-bodied invertebrates, such as earthworms.¹⁰

LIFE HISTORY. American Robins are mostly **monogamous**.¹⁰ Males stay close to their mate and initiate aggressive interactions with rival males.^{1,3} Robin territories become smaller when pair densities increase and areas range from approximately 0.1–2.0 acres.^{2,8,14} Nest site locations vary widely, but most include sturdy support in a sheltered location.¹² Males may bring some nesting material, but females build the nest.⁵ Females construct the nest from the inside using dead grass and twigs, and sometimes add paper, rootlets, feathers, and moss to the outside. A female will carry mud in her bill, knead the mud into the nest cup using her body, and lastly line the cup with fine, dead grass.² Robins do not use mud in wet regions such as the Pacific Northwest.¹³ Females lay 3–4 eggs.² Only females incubate the eggs.¹⁰ Incubation lasts 12–14 days.^{2,5} Nestlings are **altricial**.¹⁰ Both parents feed young by regurgitation at first,¹³ then with soft insects (e.g., grubs), and finally whole insects and fruit.^{2,10} Young **fledge** approximately 13 days after hatching² and parents continue to feed for another three weeks.¹⁰ **Double-clutching** and even triple clutching in southern areas is common.^{2,15} Males assume responsibility for fledglings if the female starts another **clutch**.¹⁰

STATUS. BBS data reveal that populations remained relatively stable in Minnesota, but increased in the *Central Region* and the U.S. from 1966–2006.¹¹ We observed American Robins with breeding evidence at 77% (55) of sample units and this included 9% (6) *Possible*, 26% (18) *Probable*, and 44% (31) *Confirmed* records.

CONSERVATION. No specific management is necessary to conserve American Robins. They are common and readily accept human-modified landscapes.

MBW

- Gowaty, P. A., and J. H. Plissner. 1987. Association of male and female American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) during the breeding season: paternity assurance by sexual access or mate-guarding. *Wilson Bulletin* 99:56–62.
- Howell, J. C. 1942. Notes on the nesting habits of the American Robin (*Turdus migratorius* L.). *American Midland Naturalist* 28:529–603.
- Hsu, Y. 1992. The function of aggressive interactions and singing behavior in the American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*). Dissertation, State University of New York, New York, USA.
- Janssen, R. B. 1987. Birds in Minnesota. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, USA.
- Kendeigh, S. C. 1952. Parental care and its evolution in birds. *Illinois Biological Monograph* 22:1–356.
- National Geographic Society. 2001. Field guide to the birds of North America. Third edition. National Geographic, Washington, D.C., USA.
- Paszkowski, C. A. 1982. Vegetation, ground, and frugivorous foraging of the American Robin. *Auk* 99:701–709.
- Pitts, T. D. 1984. Description of American Robin territories in northwest Tennessee. *Migrant* 55:1–6.
- Riggs, J. R. 1992. A Dakota-English Dictionary. Minnesota Historical Society Press, Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA.
- Sallabanks, R., and F. C. James. 1999. American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*). Number 454 in A. Poole and F. Gill, editors. The Birds of North America, The National Academy of Sciences, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C., USA.
- Sauer, J. R., J. E. Hines, and J. Fallon. 2008. The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966–2007. Version 5.15.2008. U.S. Geological Survey, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland, USA.
- Savard, J. P. L., and J. B. Falls. 1981. Influence of habitat structure on the nesting height of birds in urban areas. *Canadian Journal of Zoology* 59:924–932.
- Tyler, W. M. 1949. Eastern Robin. Pages 14–45 in A. C. Bent, editor. Life histories of North American thrushes, kinglets, and their allies. U.S. National Museum Bulletin 196.
- Young, H. 1951. Territorial behavior in the eastern robin. *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.Y.* 58–62:1–37.
- Young, H. 1955. Breeding behavior and nesting of the eastern robin. *American Midland Naturalist* 53:329–352.

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)

