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HIGHWOOD PARK BACKYARD FIELD GUIDE

A beginner-friendly guide to the birds and wildlife seen on the live stream



LOOK CLOSER. NOTICE MORE.

Highwood Park is a living backyard habitat in Connecticut. Use this guide to recognize frequent visitors, understand a few of their behaviors, and make each livestream a little more rewarding to watch.



SCAN TO WATCH LIVE

The birds stay the star.

This guide adds a light educational layer to the Highwood Park experience. You do not need to know birds to enjoy the stream - just notice one detail at a time.

1 SPOT

Notice size, color, shape and where the visitor lands.

2 COMPARE

Match what you see to the quick-ID cards in this guide.

3 WATCH

Look for a behavior: feeding, caching, bathing, calling or chasing.

What the habitat offers

WATER

Birdbath + dripper

Bathing and drinking draw birds that may ignore feeders.

SEED

Tray + hanging feeders

Different feeder styles favor different body sizes and feeding habits.

COVER

Shrubs + wooded edge

Dense cover gives small birds quick escape routes and resting places.

PERCH

Branches + logs

Natural perches create staging points before birds approach food or water.



Blue Jay

Cyanocitta cristata

QUICK ID

Large blue, white and black bird with a crest and long tail.

WATCH FOR

Often favors tray feeders, peanuts, sunflower seed, acorns and the birdbath.

FUN FACT

Blue Jays are intelligent corvids; their fondness for acorns helped spread oak trees.

FREQUENT VISITOR



Northern Cardinal

Cardinalis cardinalis

QUICK ID

Male: brilliant red. Female: warm brown with red accents. Both have a crest and thick orange-red bill.

WATCH FOR

Often feeds lower or on trays; sunflower seed is a favorite. Listen for clear whistles.

FUN FACT

Female cardinals sing too - unusual among North American songbirds.

FREQUENT VISITOR



Black-capped Chickadee

Parus atricapillus

QUICK ID

Tiny bird with black cap and bib, white cheeks and gray back.

WATCH FOR

Quick grab-and-go feeder visits; often takes a seed and leaves to eat or cache it.

FUN FACT

Chickadees cache food in many hiding places and can remember large numbers of them.

FREQUENT VISITOR



Tufted Titmouse

Parus bicolor

QUICK ID

Small gray bird with a pointed crest, pale underside and dark eye.

WATCH FOR

Fast feeder visits; often chooses sunflower seed and carries food away.

FUN FACT

Titmice commonly travel with chickadees and other small woodland birds.

FREQUENT VISITOR



American Goldfinch

Spinus tristis

QUICK ID

Small finch. Breeding males are bright yellow with black wings; females are duller olive-yellow.

WATCH FOR

Watch the mesh feeder and seed heads. They favor small seeds such as nyjer and sunflower.

FUN FACT

Goldfinches nest unusually late in summer, when seed-bearing plants are abundant.

SEASONAL / FREQUENT



Downy Woodpecker

Dryobates pubescens

QUICK ID

Small black-and-white woodpecker with a short bill; males show a small red patch on the back of the head.

WATCH FOR

Clings vertically to trunks and feeders; often interested in suet and insects.

FUN FACT

It is North America's smallest woodpecker and often joins mixed winter flocks.

FREQUENT VISITOR



Red-bellied Woodpecker

Melanerpes carolinus

QUICK ID

Medium woodpecker with barred black-and-white back and bright red on the head.

WATCH FOR

Strong climber; may visit feeders for nuts, seeds or suet and stash food in bark crevices.

FUN FACT

Its name refers to a faint reddish belly that is often harder to see than the red head.

REGULAR VISITOR



White-breasted Nuthatch

Sitta carolinensis

QUICK ID

Compact blue-gray bird with white face and underparts; often seen headfirst on trunks.

WATCH FOR

Creeps down bark headfirst and visits feeders for seeds, nuts and suet.

FUN FACT

Nuthatches move headfirst down trees, a useful angle for finding food hidden in bark.

REGULAR VISITOR



Mourning Dove

Zenaida macroura

QUICK ID

Soft tan-gray body, small head, long pointed tail and dark wing spots.

WATCH FOR

Usually feeds on the ground or low trays, walking slowly while picking up seed.

FUN FACT

Their wings can make a sharp whistling sound during takeoff.

FREQUENT GROUND VISITOR



House Finch

Haemorhous mexicanus

QUICK ID

Small streaky finch; males often show red-orange on the head and chest.

WATCH FOR

Often sits at feeders longer than chickadees, cracking seeds in place.

FUN FACT

House Finches are highly social and commonly gather around feeders in small groups.

REGULAR VISITOR



Eastern Gray Squirrel

Sciurus carolinensis

QUICK ID

Gray-brown squirrel with a large bushy tail and agile climbing style.

WATCH FOR

Expect bold tray visits, seed sampling and creative attempts to reach feeders.

FUN FACT

Squirrels bury food for later; forgotten nuts can become new trees.

VERY FREQUENT



Eastern Chipmunk

Tamias striatus

QUICK ID

Small ground squirrel with dark-and-light stripes along the back and face.

WATCH FOR

Rapid ground-level visits; often stuffs seeds into expandable cheek pouches.

FUN FACT

Chipmunks carry food underground and maintain stored caches for later use.

REGULAR VISITOR

Identification is only the beginning.

Once you recognize a visitor, watch how it moves. Behavior can be just as distinctive as color.

GRAB & GO

Chickadees and titmice often take one seed and leave quickly. They may eat it on a nearby perch or hide it for later.

STAY & CRACK

Finches may remain at the feeder while opening several seeds in place.

HEADFIRST

A nuthatch moving down a trunk headfirst is displaying one of its signature behaviors.

DRUM & CLIMB

Woodpeckers brace with stiff tail feathers while climbing and probing bark.

GROUND PATROL

Doves, squirrels and chipmunks often work the ground beneath feeders for spilled seed.

BATH TIME

Bathing can include splashing, wing flicking and short pauses on a nearby perch to preen.

SPECIAL VISITORS

Hawks, raccoons and other less-predictable guests may appear. Enjoy the moment, but remember: exact species identification can require a clear view of size, markings and behavior. When in doubt, call it a 'hawk' or 'raptor' until the evidence is better.

1

SPRING

Courtship, territorial singing, nesting activity and bursts of migration.

2

SUMMER

Fledglings, bathing, active feeding and family groups learning the habitat.

3

FALL

Migration movement, changing plumage, seed abundance and new seasonal visitors.

4

WINTER

Feeder dependence increases, mixed-species flocks form, and cold-weather behaviors become easier to see.

Highwood Park Spotter Challenge

Use this as a casual checklist during a stream. No pressure - the fun is noticing what shows up.

☐

Blue Jay

☐

Northern Cardinal

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Chickadee

☐

Tufted Titmouse

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Goldfinch

☐

Woodpecker

☐

Nuthatch

☐

Mourning Dove

☐

Squirrel

☐

Chipmunk

☐

A bird using the bath

☐

A visitor carrying food away

KEEP WATCHING. KEEP NOTICING.

The more time you spend with a habitat, the more patterns you begin to see. Thank you for making Highwood Park part of your day.



WATCH HIGHWOOD PARK LIVE

DAILY DISCOVERY IDEAS

- Bird of the Day
- Did You Know? wildlife fact
- Viewer poll
- Spotter challenge
- Seasonal habitat note
- What are you seeing? chat prompt