



Brilliant Backyard Birds

Finding a Favorite Feathered Friend



Written by: Noah & Leayne



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Acknowledgements

Cover Photography

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Introduction

How do you find a unique bird? Unique up on it. What a hoot!

Hawai'i is home to many unique birds, some are **native** to Hawai'i and some are from other places in the world. Chances are, the birds you see in your backyard are those from other places in the world. Getting to know these birds helps us to better know about the place we live as well as understand the **diversity** that is found in our island home. When we know more about the place we live, it can strengthen our connection to 'āina (land). When our connection is strong, we will know how to care for it with pride and respect.

Most of the birds you will find in your backyard are not native. While we want you to admire and kilo (observe) the birds in your backyard, we suggest that you don't feed them. Feeding them can cause more problems for them and our 'āina.

We hope that you will take this book with you on your adventures outside to get to know these birds.



Yellow-billed Cardinal (*Paroaria capitata*)



© Charles J Sharp

Male Yellow-billed Cardinal

Did you know?
The Yellow-billed Cardinal looks very similar to the Red-crested Cardinal (photo below) which you will also see on other Hawaiian Islands, however, it doesn't have a **crest** on its head.



© Robert

Say What?
When the Yellow-billed cardinal sings, it sounds like it is saying, "chew-wee-chew" over and over.



© Charles J Sharp

Female Yellow-billed Cardinal

Yellow-Billed Cardinal

What do they look like?

- The **male** Yellow-billed Cardinal is a medium sized songbird that has a bright red head and a deep yellow beak. The back of their body is covered in black feathers and the underside is covered in white feathers. The white feathers come up their neck to form a collar that almost meets the black feathers and their neck is black.
- The **female** is similar to the male except they have a brown head and their back feathers are gray.

What do they eat?

- These birds mainly eat seeds and insects but will also eat some fruits. You will see this bird spending lots of time on the ground pecking for seeds.

Where are they from?

- Yellow-billed Cardinals are **native** to South America.
- The only other part of the world they are found is Hawai'i. These birds were **introduced** to Kona, Hawai'i in the 1960's but it is not known how or why they were brought here.



Java Sparrow (*Lonchura oryzivora*)



© Kim Bridges

Adult Java Sparrow in Hawai'i

Did you know?

The Java Sparrow has many different names such as Java Finch, Java Rice Bird and the Paddy Bird.

A group of finches is called a "charm".

Say What?

The Java Sparrow's song is soft and sounds like "ch'lik" and is repeated. Their call sounds like "pik-pik-pik". When they feel threatened, they give a very aggressive growl "GRRRRRRRR!"



© Kim Bridges

Juvenile (young) Java Sparrow in Hawai'i



Java Sparrow

What do they look like?

- The male and female Java Sparrow are almost identical. They both have a black head and there is a large white cheek patch on their faces. They have a pink cone-shaped beak and they also have a red ring around their eyes. The top of their bodies along with their chests are covered in gray feathers while their undersides have light brown feathers on their bellies. The tops of their tails are black and the undersides of their tails are white.

What do they eat?

- They eat seeds, grains and fruits.
- They also really like to eat rice and have been considered a pest and a big threat to growing rice. California has made it a law not to keep this bird as a pet because it's such a pest and could become a real agricultural problem.

Where are they from?

- Java Sparrows are native to Java and Bali, islands found in Indonesia. Although it is a very popular pet in Asia, the Java Sparrow is considered **endangered** in its native habitat.
- Java Sparrows were introduced to O'ahu as a pet in the 1960s. The first Java Sparrows spotted on Hawai'i Island were in Kona in 1982.



Saffron Finch (*Sicalis flaveola*)



© Tom Fake

Male Saffron Finch

Did you know?

In the winter they prefer to live in flocks but in the spring, they live as a pair for breeding. The males are very territorial and aggressive during breeding season. If they are kept as caged birds, they have to be separated.

Say What?

The Saffron Finch has a very pleasant repetitive song which is why many people keep them as caged birds.

Their song is a repetition of whistles and chirps.

When they call it sounds like “chirp” or “tick”.



© Felix Uribe

Female Saffron Finch



Saffron Finch

What do they look like?

- The male Saffron Finch is bright yellow and has an orange patch of feathers on top of his **crown** (head). Their wings and tails are outlined in black feathers. The top part of their beak is black and the lower part is white.
- The female Saffron Finch is much duller than the male, more like an olive-brown color and they can also have more streaks of black feathers covering its body.

What do they eat?

- They can be found on the ground looking for insects and seeds such as grass seeds.

Where are they from?

- The Saffron Finch is native to South America and are found all across the **continent**.
- They were introduced to O‘ahu in the 1960s. They were introduced to Hawai‘i island in 1965 at the Pu‘u Wa‘a Wa‘a Ranch in Kona.



Warbling White Eye (*Zosterops japonicus*)



© Laitche

Did you know?

If you hear a Warbling White Eye singing, it might be a male bird who is letting other birds know where his **territory** is so that they stay away.

What kind of food is this Warbling White Eye looking for?

Say What?

These birds are considered beautiful singers and used to be kept as pets because of that. Their song is a series of high tinkling notes. When they call they sound like they are saying in a high tiny voice “*Chwee! Chwee! Chwee!*”



© Dick Daniels

A mated pair of Warbling White Eyes will stay together for years.



Warbling White Eye (Japanese name: *Mejiro*)

What do they look like?

- Warbling White Eyes are small yellow-green birds with a gray and white belly. Their beaks are dark and straight.
- Males and females look nearly identical.
- The easiest way to identify a Warbling White Eye is by the bright white circle that is around each of their eyes.

What do they eat?

- Warbling White Eyes are **omnivores**. This means that they eat both animals and plants. They love to eat fruit and insects. Sometimes you will even see them drinking nectar from flowers such as 'ōhi'a lehua.

Where are they from?

- They are native to parts of eastern Asia including China, Japan, Indonesia, and parts of the Philippines.
- Warbling White Eyes were first introduced to O'ahu in 1929, and quickly spread to all of the main islands.
- Scientists think that there are more Warbling White Eyes in the main Hawaiian Islands now than *any other species of bird!* They are small so people don't always notice them. Are there any that live near you?



Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)



FWS - USFWS website

Male Northern Cardinal

Did you know?
Both male and female cardinals attack their own reflections in window and shiny car bumpers to defend their **territories** against what they think are other birds. They can spend hours fighting their reflection.

Say What?

When the cardinal sings, it sounds like it is saying, “cheer, cheer cheer” or “birdie, birdie, birdie”.



© Sheila Brown

Female Northern Cardinal



Northern Cardinal (Hawaiian name: *Manu 'Ula* or *Manu Māka'i*)

What do they look like?

- The male cardinal is a medium sized bird with bright red feathers all over its body, a black face mask, a short orange cone-shaped beak and a **crest** on top of its head.
- The female is similar to the male but it's a bit smaller and its body is covered with gray feathers which also contain some red feathers.

What do they eat?

- The cardinal eats lots of seeds, grains and fruit. Their strong beak are specialized to crack open seeds. Occasionally, they will eat insects and they also feed their babies insects only.

Where are they from?

- Northern Cardinals are from both North and South America.
- The first Northern Cardinals were introduced to the Hawaiian Islands in 1929. Also, between 1929-1930, 163 cardinals were brought to Hawai'i Island through the Buy-a-Bird Campaign. This was a program where children from schools raised money to bring birds from O'ahu to Hawai'i Island.



House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)



©Adamo

An adult male House Sparrow

Did you know?
Because people have introduced House Sparrows to so many places, they are considered *the most widely distributed wild bird in the whole world!*

Say what?
House Sparrow calls sound like they are saying “*Cheek! Chirk!*” They like to all talk at once over each other.



©Diliff

An adult female House Sparrow



House Sparrow (Hawaiian name: *Manu Kālā*)

What do they look like?

- House Sparrows are small birds with large round heads and short, cone shaped beaks.
- Males and females look very different. Females are a duller brown and gray color. They are slightly more brown on their backs and on the tops of their heads
- Males are have bolder colors. The back of the male and the back part of the male's head is a darker brown. He also has a gray crown of feathers on the top of his head. There is a black mask of feathers around his eyes that come down around his beak and down his chest like a black beard. His chest and belly are gray.

What do they eat?

- House Sparrows prefer to eat seeds and grains, but they will eat pretty much anything available to them. In cities, a big part of their diet is leftover food given to them by humans.

Where are they from?

- House Sparrows are native to Europe, the Mediterranean, and large parts of Asia. They've also been introduced to many other places. They've been in Hawai'i since at least 1871.



Spotted Dove (*Spelopelia chinensis*)



©Dick Daniels

Did you know?
The Hawaiian name given to the Spotted Dove is 'Ehakō. It is a name that mimics what Hawaiian language speakers think the bird's call sounds like.

An adult Spotted Dove

Say what?
Spotted Doves have a gentle cooing call that sounds like "krookruk, krookruk kroo, kroo, kroo."



©SupernovaExplosion

A juvenile Spotted Dove



Spotted Dove (Hawaiian name: 'Ehakō)

What do they look like?

- Spotted doves are a large plump looking bird. They are mostly gray, with a grayish brown color on their backs. The throats and breasts of these birds have a rosy pink and gray color. The backs of their necks have the beautiful black and white spots that give this bird its name. **Juvenile** (young) birds don't have spots yet, and their necks are gray (see bottom-right photo).
- Spotted Doves lay up to two white eggs in a nest on a flat surface, sometimes even on buildings!

What do they eat?

- Spotted doves like to eat seeds from weeds and grasses. You might see them on the ground foraging for food.

Where are they from?

- Spotted Doves are originally from Southeast Asia. They were brought to Hawai'i before 1855 - which means they've been here longer than most other introduced birds!
- Some people hunt Spotted Doves for food, and that's possibly the reason why they were first brought to Hawai'i.



Common Mynah (*Acridotheres tristis*)

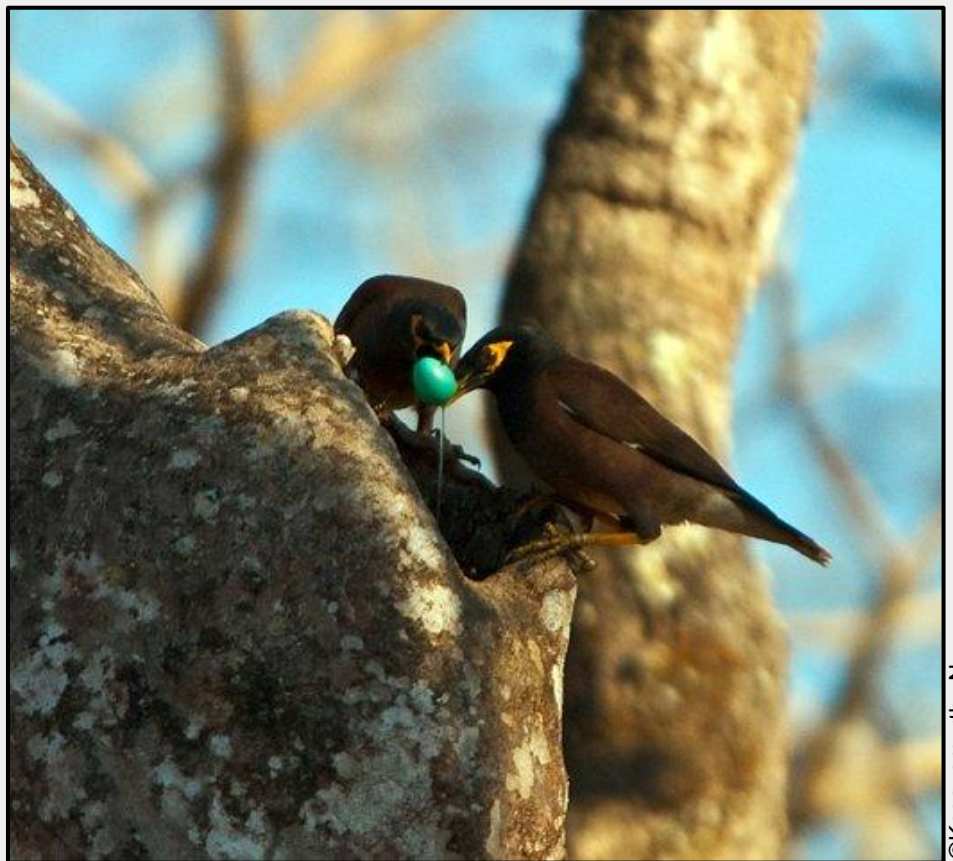


©Richard Taylor

Did you know?
Common Mynahs like to **roost** (sleep) in large flocks in trees. You might hear them in trees at sunset or just before sunrise. They are very noisy! What do you think they are talking about?

Male and female Common Mynahs look very similar.

Say what?
When the Common Mynah calls, it sounds like it is scolding you and saying, “*radio-radio-radio.*” It can also make a wide variety of high pitched clicks and calls.



©Kesavamurthy N

If you find an old blue egg shell it might be from the egg of a Common Mynah!



Common Mynah (Hawaiian name: *Pihe‘ekelo* or *Piha‘ekelo*)

What do they look like?

- Common Mynahs have a brown body, a black head, and a yellow patch behind their eyes.
- Their legs and beaks are bright yellow.

What do they eat?

- Common Mynahs are **omnivores**. Common Mynahs are not picky eaters at all. They are known to eat small reptiles, crabs, bugs (especially grasshoppers), grain, fruits, and even rubbish!

Where are they from?

- Common Mynahs are originally from a part of Asia and the Middle East that includes both India and Pakistan.
- They were first brought to Hawai‘i to control insect pests in 1866.
- Common Mynahs are spreading so quickly around the world that they are considered to be an **invasive species**. This means that they can cause serious problems for people and nature in the new places that they are moving into.



It's your Turn!

Now that you know about these birds, the fun part is going outside to find them. Birds are everywhere! The real fun starts when you begin to notice their different behaviors and wonder what they are doing.

Here are some questions that might guide your observations:

What kinds of birds did you find?

How many did you see?

What were they doing?

Why do you think they are doing that?

Now it's your turn to be the scientist and record your data. Use the table on the next page to track your findings.



Data Recording

Date and Time	Type of Bird	How many?	What are they doing?	What else did you see outside?

More Bird Fun: Test your Bird Knowledge

Z	B	S	Q	Q	S	O	I	K	R	H	M	I	M	Y	L
M	J	A	N	Q	P	J	M	Z	T	R	T	E	Y	A	X
H	I	F	R	O	O	S	T	I	R	L	V	Z	N	X	B
V	S	F	L	V	T	Z	E	I	N	I	M	I	A	P	I
I	C	R	E	S	T	Y	W	C	T	V	D	L	H	H	R
N	H	O	U	S	E	S	P	A	R	R	O	W	B	E	D
Z	Z	N	Z	E	D	J	N	S	A	C	R	R	E	E	S
K	S	F	T	Y	D	H	P	C	S	S	D	L	E	N	A
C	X	I	H	K	O	I	N	V	A	S	I	V	E	D	R
Z	H	N	P	Z	V	R	M	Z	Z	N	V	K	F	A	E
W	H	C	Q	F	E	M	A	L	E	I	E	A	X	N	C
D	V	H	Y	H	Y	P	T	V	G	U	R	D	A	G	O
B	I	N	T	R	O	D	U	C	E	D	S	Y	D	E	O
G	H	R	C	M	L	J	X	Q	O	D	I	V	V	R	L
D	O	A	K	G	Y	C	I	A	T	G	T	J	R	E	U
N	O	Z	T	A	P	D	B	A	C	K	Y	A	R	D	H

WORDS

Backyard
Birds are Cool
Crest
Diversity
Endangered

House Sparrow
Introduced
Invasive
Juvenile
Mynah

Native
Northern Cardinal
Omnivore
Saffron Finch
Spotted Dove

White Eye
Female
Roost

FANRSFO CNHIF

8	9			2	3			7				
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VJAA ORASPWR

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MEAL

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EGDNAEDENR

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OTSPTED OVDE

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WTEIH YEE

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1	2	3	4	5
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6	7	2	5
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8	Q	4	9	5
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10	11	10	6	11	2
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Glossary

Crest: A group of upright feathers on a bird's head.

Crown: The top of the bird's head.

Continent: One of the seven great land masses found on the Earth.

Diversity: All the different kinds of living things that live in a place.

Endangered: When any plant or animal is in danger of being gone forever.

Female: A woman or girl. A person or animal that can give birth or lay eggs.

Introduced: When a plant or animal is not native to where it lives. They are either brought to a new place by accident or on purpose.

Invasive Species: A plant or animal that is introduced to an area and causes damage to its new home.

Juvenile: Young, like a child.

Male: A man or a boy.

Native: Living things that live in an area naturally, they have found their way to their home without human help but by wings, water or waves.

Omnivore: An animal that eats both plants and animals.

Roost: A place for a bird to rest or sleep.