Eagle-Eye Tours

Best Bird Identification Apps

Link: Best Bird Identification Apps

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Whether you are a beginner or advanced birder, birdwatching is a great way to connect with the outdoors. However, identifying birds can sometimes be challenging. That’s where bird identification apps come in handy! These apps can help you identify a bird you see, or even hear, in the wild. In this article, we'll explore some of our favorite apps for identifying birds by sight and sound (including some free options), so that next time someone asks, "What bird is that?" you'll have no trouble answering.

Merlin Bird ID

Merlin Bird ID is a free app developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin offers four fun ways to identify birds: answer a few simple questions, upload a photo, record a singing bird, or explore birds in a region. It is powered by eBird, the world's largest database of bird sightings, sounds and photos. When you give Merlin a date and location it checks hundreds of millions of records in the eBird's citizen-science database to find out which birds you are most likely to see. Merlin uses computer vision technology to identify birds in photos. To identify a bird by a photo, simply snap a photo of the bird (or pull one from your camera roll) and you will get a short list of possible matches. Similarly, the Sound ID feature listens to the birds around you and shows real-time suggestions. You can then compare your recordings to the songs and calls in Merlin to confirm what you heard. Alternatively, you can also answer three simple questions about size, color, and behavior, and Merlin will give you a list of possible matches. Merlin is the most comprehensive of the bird apps we looked at. It offers quick identification for birds across the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. As of December 2022, Merlin has content for over 10,000 species and they are continually updating their regions. You can download Merlin bird packs for popular vacation spots like Hawaii, the Caribbean, Central America, Europe, and many other parts of the world. Even if you are in an area that doesn't have a bird pack to download, some parts of Merlin will still continue to work. Merlin can also work offline by simply selecting your location ahead of time and you can use this app to keep track of your sightings (through eBird). Merlin offers quick identification for all levels of birders and works on Android and iOS devices, and is also available in many languages besides English.

Audubon Bird Guide

The Audubon Bird Guide is a free field guide to over 830 species of North American birds. It can help you identify birds in North America when you are out in the field, by simply entering the characteristics you were able to observe, such as: what color was it? How big? What did its tail look like? The app will narrow down a list of possible matches for your location and date in real time. The app contains over 3,000 photos, over eight hours of audio clips of songs and calls, as well as multi-

season range maps. By downloading the field guide to your phone, you will have access to all the photos, bird calls and range maps when offline. You can also use this app to keep track of all your bird sightings to help create your life list. It will also notify you when a bird you want to see is recorded nearby. This app is free and available for Android and iOS.

Sibley Birds 2nd Edition

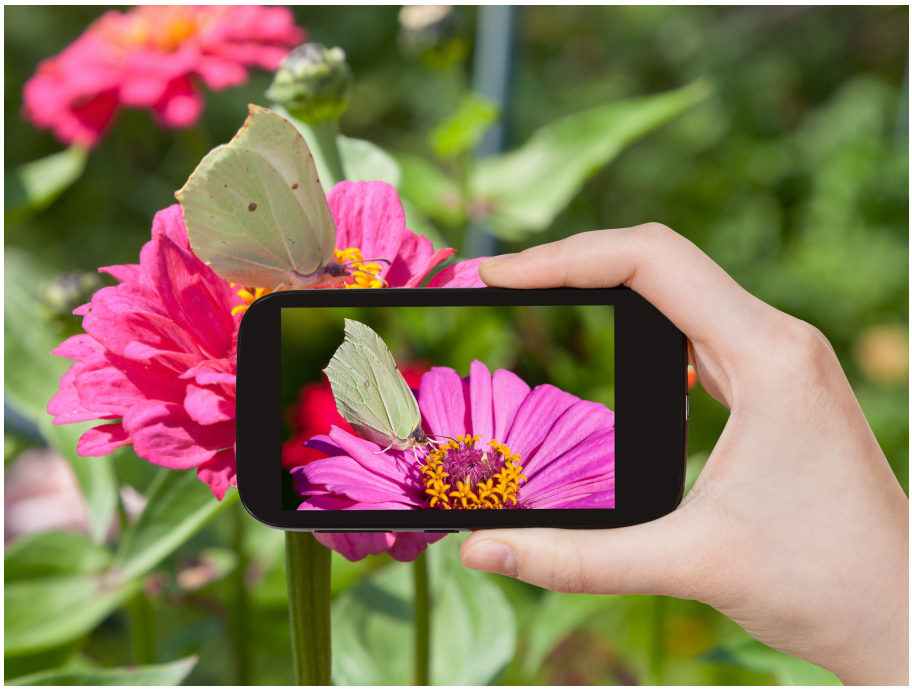
Sibley Birds 2nd Edition is another digital field guide that includes all of the content from 'The Sibley Guide to Birds' and more, but in a much lighter format than the guide book. It includes over 2,800 audio recordings, additional text and images for every species in every state and province, hundreds of searchable criteria that help you identify birds faster, a customizable checklist tool and much more. Once the app is installed on your device, all of the data, images, and sounds are stored in the device's memory and will work without any internet connection. The Smart Search allows you to search by: bird habits, bird type, bird size, body shape, color and pattern. As well, the app has a similar species feature which shows all related birds and you can also compare 2 species side-by-side. This app will also keep your list of species seen. This app only includes species found in the continental US and Canada (north of Mexico). The app costs $27.99 CAD and is available on Android and iOS devices.

iBird Pro Guide to Birds

The iBird Pro app is an electronic field guide to 940 birds across North America (including Hawaii). Simply narrow down the list of birds by selecting your location, then use filters such as "General," which includes shape and size categories or "Very Specific" like bill length or wing pattern. From there, the app will provide you with a few options allowing you to quickly identify the species. The app includes multiple illustrations and photographs for every bird, and will highlight field marks on illustrations. In addition, the app also has multiple songs and calls for most of the birds. The app will also allow you to compare similar species to help you with identification. The app costs around $12.99/year and is available for android and iOS devices. They do have a free 7-day trial if you want to check it out before buying. They also have a version for Ireland and UK for $20.99 CAD.

Other Apps

In addition to bird identification apps, there are apps that can help you with learning bird songs and calls such as Larkwire or Chirp! They make learning bird sounds fun by turning it into a game. What about identifying other wildlife? iNaturalist is a great app that can help you identify plants and animals. Simply take or import a photo and view the top 10 most visually similar species matches and tap through to get more information.



Smartphones have become an invaluable tool for birders. There are a number of apps out there to help you identify birds and we have identified our favorites. These apps are great for allowing you to access information quickly, rather than having to flip through your field guides. No need to lug around those heavy books anymore. In addition, these apps usually contain a lot more information than a single field guide. Now you are going to have to find a new use for all those paper field guides sitting on your shelf.