

Backyard Birding Guides

#3 - Birdwatching Resources

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General Field Guides

Eventually most backyard feeder watchers, casual birdwatchers or beginning birdwatchers realize that they need a bird book to identify the birds they don't know. Not too many years ago that decision led to one conclusion: purchase Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds*. In the past twenty years however, many new field guides have become available. Because of the many choices now available, you can be more selective about what you purchase.

Find a book that you are comfortable with. Most will have the birds in the same order. This is the standardized order of the American Ornithological Union (AOU). The birds in the illustrations should look like the birds you are seeing. The text should be easy to read and make sense. It may be easier with your first bird book to have one that has the picture of the bird, the descriptive text, and the range map altogether. Some books will have photos, others will have illustrations. Choose the book you are more comfortable with.

Following is a list of the general field guides currently available. Some field guides are divided into an eastern or western version. Field guides that have eastern and western versions use the Great Plains as the dividing line, so in Kansas, it may be necessary to have both versions.

There are also "beginners" guides available. Do not hesitate to start with one of these guides, but realize that they will not be nearly as inclusive. Within a few years, you may need to buy one of the full versions. Recent releases have established new standards for what we look for in bird guides.

The Guide to Kansas Birds and Birding Hotspots, Bob Gress and Pete Janzen, 2008, The University Press of Kansas. This is a well done beginners bird book that focuses on the most common 295 species in Kansas. Both authors are from Wichita.

Birds of North America, Kenn Kaufman, 1st Edition, 2000, Houghton Mifflin - [considered by this writer to be the preferred full field guide for beginners and backyard bird watchers.]

The Sibley Guide to Birds, David Sibley, 1st Edition, 2000, Knopf/National Audubon Society. In April 2003, Sibley released smaller eastern and western edition versions of his classic *Guide to Birds*. Range maps and some illustrations were updated and more text added.

National Geographic Society - Field Guide to the Birds of North America, 5th Edition, 2006, National Geographic Society

Peterson Field Guide Series

A Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern and Central North America, 6th Edition, 2010

A Field Guide to Birds of Western North America, 4th Edition, 2010, Houghton Mifflin Company. In 2008 revised combined edition of the eastern and western versions was released; ***Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America***.

The Stokes Field Guide to Birds of North America, 1st edition, 2010, Little, Brown & Co., Donald & Lillian Stokes.

Birds of Kansas, 2011, University Press of Kansas, Thompson, Ely, Gress, Otte, Patti, Seibel & Young. Not a field guide, but an excellent source of additional information about birds of Kansas.

Bird Magazines

The following magazines dedicated to wild birds, birdwatching and bird conservation issues. All have web sites and should be easily found using an internet search engine.

Birdwatching Magazine

(formerly *Birder's World*)

Bird Watchers Digest

Wild Bird

Living Bird Quarterly

Birding

Bird Watching Organizations

Organizations dedicated to wild birds, birdwatching and habitat conservation.

Kansas Ornithological Society (KOS)

<http://ksbirds.org>

American Birding Association

<http://aba.org/>

Audio Aids

BirdJam

Peterson Field Guide to Western Bird Songs

and - Eastern/Central North America

Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs (Eastern and Western Versions)

Many of these are now available as music downloads to a portable music device (also often known as an iPod or MP3 player). The Stokes and Peterson bird songs are still available on CDs.

Computer Programs and Applications

There are numerous program to help you keep track of your bird sightings. Well known programs include: ***Birdbase***, ***AviSys***, ***Birder's Diary***, ***Bird Brain*** (for Mac).

Sibley e-guide to Birds of North America -

iPhone and Android (Blackberry pending)

IBird - iPhone and Android

Peterson Birds of North America - iPhone

More information about these programs can be found on the internet.

Internet

There are many good internet sites for bird information. There are also internet based discussion lists that you can subscribe to at no charge. KSBIRD-L is devoted to birds in Kansas. BirdChat has a national/international focus. Contact Chuck Otte at the email address below to join either of these discussion lists.

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