

Kidz' n Nature
Outdoor Wonders: Symphony of Sounds
By Suzanne Kahn Eder

Sometimes it can be tricky to find wildlife on outdoor adventures. Animals have a variety of strategies for staying safe from potential danger. Some are masters of camouflage while others simply hide. With their feathers and wings, most birds escape predators by taking flight. Even though it can be difficult to see birds that are perched high up in the treetops, we can often hear them singing their varied songs. People who spend a lot of time listening to birds can actually identify a feathered friend just by hearing its song!

Many bird songs can be remembered with the use of catchy phrases. For example, the common crow's song sounds like, "Caw, caw, caw!" Crows are large black birds with strong pointed beaks that enable a varied diet. They are relatives of the raven and blue jay. In the winter, crows sleep in large groups called roosts. As the sun sets, the "Caw, caw, caws" of hundreds of crows can be heard all at once!

Another bird that is frequently heard is the mourning dove. Its song sounds like, "Oahoo, coo, coo, coo" and is mistaken by some for the call of an owl. Mourning doves are light brown and are often seen feeding in pairs. They eat seeds on the ground with their short beaks and are common visitors to neighborhood birdfeeder habitats.

The other day, I saw a flock of robins on the edge of a field. Had they also been singing, I would have heard the uplifting song of, "Cheerio, cheery me, cheerio!" The robin has a rusty orange-colored breast with a gray back. This spring, you are likely to see robins walking in grassy areas hunting for earthworm meals.

On my way to work last week, I heard the familiar sound of the cardinal. It sounds like, "Cheer, cheer, cheer, wit, wit, wit." Male cardinals are bright red, while the females are a tan color. Both have large crests on their heads and are frequently seen at birdfeeders.

The spring is a super time to practice your bird song listening skills. You are likely to hear a symphony of songs as birds work to attract mates and establish territories. If you are lucky, you might also catch a glimpse of the birds as they are singing. Next time you are outside, no matter whether it is in the city or a less urban area, stop what you are doing and listen for a few minutes. You may be surprised by all that you hear!

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