



Winter birding



Black-capped Chickadee;
Photo by NCC

Spot, support and enjoy Canada's cold-weather birds

Highlighting common species that stay through the snow, essential gear tips and how you can help birds thrive through Canada's coldest months.

Gear up for birding season

Birding in winter isn't about braving the cold; it's about embracing it. With the right gear you'll discover that even the frostiest days are full of life.

Binoculars

- 8x42 models (that's 8x magnification with 42mm lenses) are ideal for bright, crisp views even in low winter light.

Notebook or app

- Log what you see and what you hear. The Merlin Bird ID and e-Bird apps are great tools for both.
- If your birding app includes a playback function to play calls to birds, resist the temptation to use them. It can disrupt the birds' natural behaviour and cause confusion if they don't match the local dialect.

Layers

- Dress in breathable, quiet fabrics; avoid bright colours and noisy zippers that startle birds.

Timing

- Dawn and late afternoon offer the best light and the most activity.

Etiquette

- Keep feeders clean and skip salted foods; it's harmful to birds.

Footwear

- Waterproof boots with good traction help when snow or ice covers your path.

Gloves

- Choose thin, dexterous gloves so you can adjust binoculars or snap photos without freezing your fingers.

Capture the moment

Camera or phone

Use zoom instead of approaching too closely.

Lighting tip

Position the sun behind you for sharper colours.

Patience pays off

Birds often return to the same perch or feeder spot within minutes.

Enjoy the view

Spend a few minutes each day watching your visitors come and go. It's an easy way to connect with nature and a gentle reminder of why protecting it matters.



Make your space more bird friendly

Whether you're in the city, the countryside or your own backyard, birdwatching is one of the easiest ways to connect with nature year-round. Here are some tips to help you spread your wings and get started.

Feeder setup

- Choose a sturdy feeder that can stand up to wind and snow.
- Place it in a quiet, visible area that's easy to refill, ideally near evergreen trees or shrubs that provide natural shelter. Otherwise, the seed can blow away or get wet.
- Once you start feeding birds, don't stop! Many depend on your feeder until spring.
- Clean feeders regularly to help prevent disease among visiting birds. For simple cleaning tips, review this link from Birds Canada: www.birdscanada.org/you-can-help/keeping-feeder-birds-healthy

Safety first

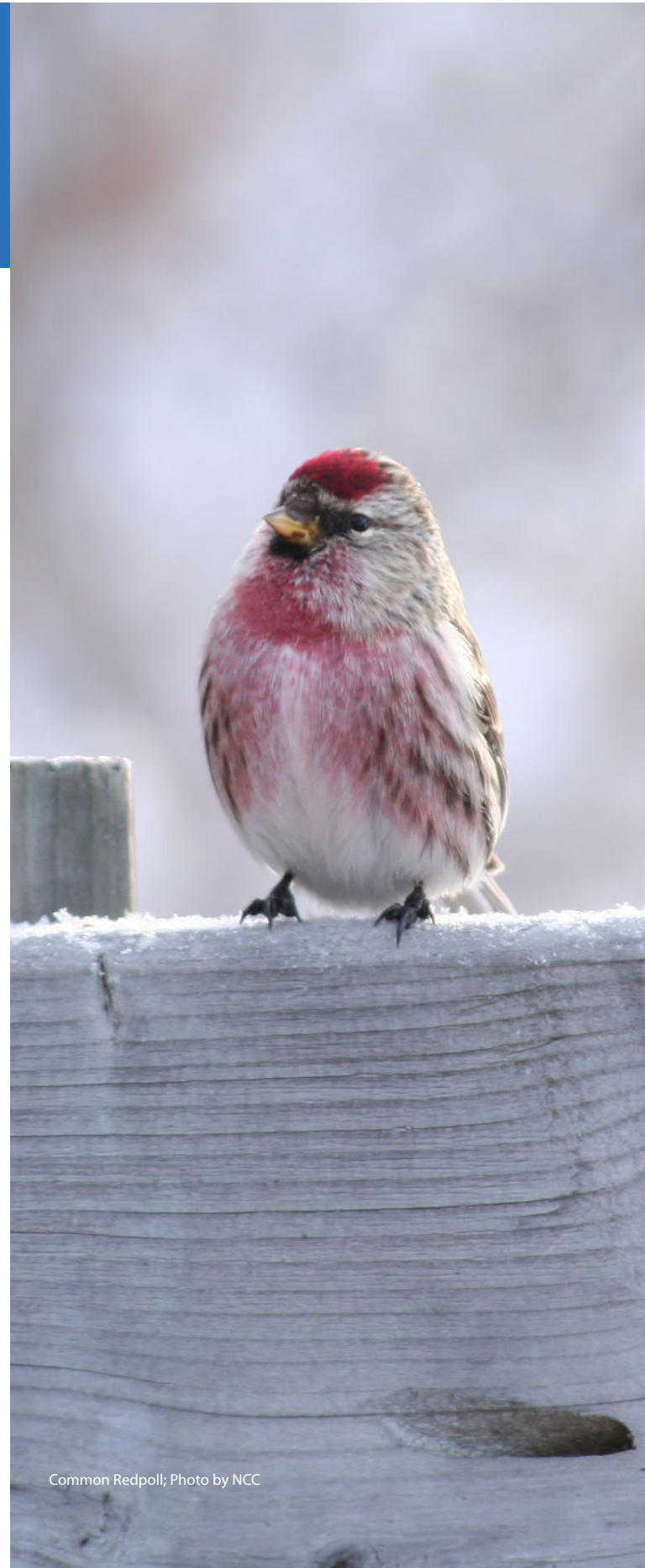
- Position where predators are easy to spot and can be avoided.
- Keep it well away from reflective glass to reduce window strikes.
- Watch for signs of cats or other threats and adjust feeder placement as needed.

Feeding tips

- The best all-around attractant? Black-oil sunflower seed.
- Observe which prefer seeds, nuts or suet. Mix it up to keep them coming back.
- Heading away for a few days? Ask a neighbour to refill while you're gone.

Add a winter water source

- Provide a shallow dish with a few stones or branches so birds can perch without getting wet.
- Use a heater or daily refills to keep water from freezing.
- A reliable water source can attract species that normally skip seed feeders.



Common Redpoll; Photo by NCC

Birds that brave the cold

No matter where you live in Canada, you can practice winter birding. Here's a list of fourteen of our feathered favourites. Can you find them all?



Brown creeper

Found Across Canada

Tree-hugging climber with a curved bill.

Fun fact: Burns only 4–10 calories a day. One spider fuels a 60-metre climb!



Canada jay

Found in Northern Canada

A curious northern songbird often spotted near campsites and trails.

Fun fact: Uses sticky saliva to glue food behind bark for later snacking.



Dark-eyed junco

Found Across Canada

The classic “snowbird” with a slate-grey coat and white belly.

Fun fact: Forages on the ground. Scatter seed near shrubs for best results.

Birds that brave the cold continued



House finch

Found in Southern Areas of Canada

Cheerful red-tinged feeder regular with a love for sunflower seeds.

Fun fact: Sometimes mistaken for a purple finch, but its red is brighter and streakier.



White-breasted nuthatch

Found Across much of Southern Canada

The bird that defies gravity, walking head-first down tree trunks.

Fun fact: Equally at home in forests, city parks and suburban yards.



Northern cardinal

Found in Southern Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia

A flash of red in the snow. Both males and females sing.

Fun fact: Often visits feeders at dawn and dusk when it's quietest.



Common redpoll

Found Across Canada

A tiny Arctic seed-stuffer with a bright red forehead.

Fun fact: Stores food in a throat pouch, then eats it later in a sheltered spot.

Birds that brave the cold continued:

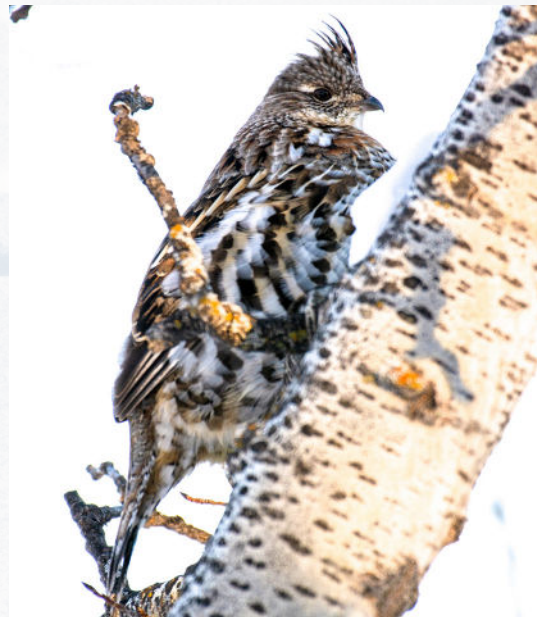


Common goldeneye

Found Across Canada

A bright-eyed duck whose wings whistle in flight.

Fun fact: Ducklings leap from tree-nest cavities a day after hatching, sometimes 12 M,



Ruffed grouse

Found Across Canada

Canada's winter drum-soloist of the forest floor.

Fun fact: Grows comb-like "snowshoe" scales on its toes to walk on snow.



Evening grosbeak

Found Across Southern Canada

Chunky, colourful and loud, a finch with a serious appetite.

Fun fact: Whole flocks can clear out a backyard feeder in minutes.



Blue jay

Found in Central and Southeastern Canada

Bold, vocal, and blue, a colour that comes from light scattering, not pigment.

Fun fact: Mimics hawk calls to warn its flock or fool rivals.

Birds that brave the cold continued:



Black-capped chickadee

Found Across Canada

Friendly and curious, the little bird that braves any storm.

Fun fact: Remembers hundreds of food hiding spots for up to a month.



Downy woodpecker

Most Common Species of Woodpecker in Canada

Smallest of Canada's woodpeckers and loudest at your feeder.

Fun fact: Its barbed tongue and sticky saliva pull insects from deep crevices.



Cedar waxwing

Found Across Much of Southern and Central Canada

Sleek, masked berry-lover that travels in sociable flocks.

Fun fact: In winter, they feast on frozen berries or sip from birdbaths and fountains.



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