American Robin

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

The American Robin, one of the best known birds in North America, was so named by the early colonists because it reminded them of the English Robin, although much larger.

The largest of the North American thrushes, its familiar song, "cheer-up, cheer cheer cheer-up," begins well before daybreak and in many regions signals the start of spring. The robin was originally a forest species, but it has adapted well to residential areas where it feeds on lawns and nests in gardens and city parks. Its characteristic hop-and-stop gait in the grass, head cocking, and sudden thrust for an earthworm are familiar sights.

Interesting Facts:

Family: Turdidae

Scientific Name: *Turdus migratorius*

Location: American Robins are found in all of the United States and Canada except for Hawaii and the northernmost parts of Alaska and Canada. They are also found in parts of Mexico and Central America. They habitat in open woodlands, fields, gardens and yards.

Migration: American Robins are migratory and populations will move south in the winter, although some populations will stay in place. In spring, Robins remain faithful to their previous territories and arrive in late March and early April. Males precede females by a few days, and territory is marked by hostile chases, attacks, and various courtship rituals.

Nesting: American Robins mate in the spring from April through July. They will have two or three broods a season and return to the same lawns year after year. The female builds a cup-shaped nest with twigs, grass and feathers. She spreads mud on the inside of the nest with her breast. After she lines the nest with mud, she will add grass and other soft materials. Sometimes males will help collect materials for the nests. Nests are built about 5 to 15 feet above the ground in a tree or bush though sometimes robins will build their nests on a window ledge. The female lays 3 to 5 bluish eggs, which she will incubate for about 2 weeks. Young

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	are born naked and blind and are tended by both parents. Young birds are fed mostly on earthworms and cutworms and leave the nest in about 14 to 16 days.
Diet:	The American Robin eats a wide variety of foods including fruits and berries, worms, grubs and caterpillars. Robins rarely consume grains or other dry plant seeds.
Size and Color:	Robins are 9-11 inches long with a wingspan of 14-3/4 - 16-1/2 inches. Normal adult robins are dark gray above, with their head, wings, and tail almost black, their outer tail feathers tipped with white, and their breast light brown to rich dark brick red (darker and brighter in males). Their throats are streaked blackish and whitish (more pronounced in males) and their lower tummy, where it meets the tail, is white.
Special Characteristics:	This common and well-known bird is noted for its habit of feeding in lawns where it finds earthworms (by sight, not sound), and for its cheery voice. Robins are often one of the first birds to sing in the morning, singing long choruses of rhythmic paired phrases of two or three syllables that alternately rise and fall in pitch. The dawn singing is reprised at dusk and occasionally throughout the day. The male robin also uses its voice to protect its territory and to attract a mate.
Song:	The Robin whistles a "cheer-up, cheer, cheer, cheer-up" melody. Its calls are: "tseep", "tuk, tuk, tuk," or "teeeek" or "peek."
Attracting:	Often thirsty, Robins make frequent use of birdbaths for drinking and bathing. Robins are not seed-eating birds. They feed on earthworms, their favorite food. They will eat from a bird table or at feeders with trays offering cut up raisins soaked in water, suet, suet mixtures, peanut butter mixtures, peanut hearts, sliced pears, strawberries, and cherries.
Life Span:	About 10-12 years in the wild.

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