

Cedar Waxwing Profile

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The Cedar Waxwing was named for its love of red cedar fruits and for the bright red, waxy material that forms on an adult's wing feathers. These birds socialize in flocks and have the unique and endearing habit of sharing their food with one another.

Adult birds show little fear of humans. In fact, in spring and summer when nesting begins, they have been known to pluck hairs from human heads to line their nest.



Interesting Facts:

Family: Bombycillidae

Scientific Name: *Bombycilla ceororum*

Location: Cedar Waxwings can be found throughout North America. Their summer range is as far north as northern Canada and Alaska. However, the vast majority of Cedar Waxwings are found in the northeastern United States, as well as the Great Lakes region and southern Ontario. Smaller concentrations can be found in the coastal areas of Washington, Oregon, and California. They prefer coniferous and birch forests in the north; as well as open woodlands, fields, farms, orchards, plantations, and suburban gardens.

Migration: The Cedar Waxwing is often thought to wander in search of food, but not migrate. During winter, their range can extend as far south as Costa Rica and as far north as southern Canada depending on the amount of fruit available for foraging. Wintering birds will normally gather in central Texas in oak and juniper trees, as well as Alabama and eastern Mississippi.

Nesting:

Cedar Waxwings are late nesters; they begin nesting in June through September (when fruit crops become ripe and plentiful). Nests are made from twigs, grasses, weeds, pine needles, and moss. Females lay 3-5 eggs and incubate them for 12-16 days. Eggs are pale gray or blue-gray with black or dark brown spots. Nestlings will leave the nest within 14-18 days. These birds generally have only one brood per year.

Diet:

A Cedar Waxwing loves fruits. It eats 70% of its diet in fruit and berries. The rest of its diet is made up of insects, tree sap, and flower petals from apple and pecan trees. Waxwings have been known to overeat - at times they get so stuffed they can barely move. They also can become confused or dizzy if they eat overripe berries. When this happens, human hands can catch them easily.

**Size and Color:**

The Cedar Waxwing typically grows from 6-1/2" to 8" long. It has a wingspan of 11" to 12-1/2". The male and female are almost identical in looks. Each is brown crested with brown turning to gray closer to the tail. They have a black mask outlined in white and a yellow underbelly. Wingtips have a red wax-like substance on the secondary feathers. They have a yellow tip on their tail. The only difference between male and female is that the male has a black throat while the female's is dark brown.

Special Characteristics:

- Cedar Waxwings form flocks of anywhere from 30 to 100. In rare cases, up to 1,000 have been found flocked together.
- They are very polite when they eat. They eat in shifts. One group feeds first then moves out of the way as the next group comes in. This is the exact opposite of most birds, who may flock together to find food, but will compete vigorously once the food is found.
- Cedar Waxwings are often found nesting later in the season than most birds. This is because they depend on a fruit diet, and it takes longer into the season for fruit to ripen.

Attract Them: If you've ever seen these incredible birds up close, you already know you'll want to see more of them in your yard. They love fruit or berry-producing trees and shrubs, such as choke cherry, mulberry, and red cedar. These friendly and social birds are also a thirsty bunch. Provide them with a water source, whether through a birdbath or garden pond.

Life Span: The oldest on record was 8 years.