

Indigo Bunting

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

The Indigo Bunting is a magnificent wild bird that many hobbyists prize. The brilliant blue coloring accompanied by its unique song make this wild bird a real treasure. In bright light, the male Indigo Bunting may appear to have a green sheen to his feathers.

One of the more fascinating facts about this species is that this bird migrates at night, using the stars as a travel guide.

The male Indigo Bunting is known to aggressively defend his nesting territory and is generally a great deal more vocal than his female counterpart.

Interesting Facts:

Family: Cardinalidae

Scientific Name: *Passerina cyanea*

Location: This species can be found in a majority of the eastern and central United States. Habitat ranges from brush and bushy areas and low trees near open areas, like fields and old croplands.

Migration: During the summer, the Indigo Bunting can be found from Manitoba to Maine and as far south as Florida. During the winter, this species moves south throughout the Caribbean and Central America into northern South America.

Nesting: Indigo Buntings usually begin breeding in early summer. The nest is an open cup constructed of leaves, weed stems and grasses, and lined soft material like fine grasses or hair. Nests are usually located close to the ground in a shrub or plant. A typical Indigo Bunting lays 3-4 eggs. This species usually remains monogamous, but may occasionally interbreed with the Lazuli Bunting.

Diet: In nature, the Indigo Bunting primarily feeds on insects and spiders along with [seeds](#), berries, and grains. This species may also feed on [millet](#), [finch](#), and [thistle seed](#).

Size and Color: The Indigo Bunting is approximately 5-1/2" in size. The male breeding plumage is a deep, brilliant blue color. Some black may be present on the back and wings. The female is very plain brown with faint wingbars. Both have a dark gray, conical bill. The male, non-breeding plumage is similar to that of the female.

Song: A long, rapid series of musical whistles with notes given in pairs. Its call is a distinct "spit" sound.

Attracting: The Indigo Bunting is primarily an insect eating bird. To attract this species to your yard, place live mealworms on an open platform feeder in your yard near shrubs so the Indigo Buntings have a place to retreat if they get frightened.

Life Span: 4-11 years in the wild.