



BACKYARD BASH: CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS Exploration Checklist

Engage creatively with nature in Marvin Grove, behind the Spencer Museum of Art! Use this exploration checklist, created by staff from the KU Natural History Museum, to help you examine & appreciate this natural space as well as thought-provoking student art installations integrated throughout the Grove.

Once completed, send your responses to the two questions posed in the "STOP & THINK" section to KUNHM social media (@kunaturalhistory FB & Insta; @kunhm Twitter) **to win a free museum t-shirt!**



Birds of KU

Although the Jayhawk is an imaginary bird, the KU campus is home to an array of real bird species. From hawks to songbirds to woodpeckers to owls and more -- whether permanent resident or migratory -- the avian population at the University of Kansas is an important part of our area's biodiversity.

RAPTORS:

How many can you find?



Red-Tailed Hawk - the most common large hawk in the United States. Their populations are steady to only slightly declining due to collisions with automobiles and trucks.



Cooper's Hawk - adults have a gray/blue back and their underside is white with horizontal streaks. The Cooper's hawk population has declined substantially due to pesticides, and many hawks are now gone from large areas of eastern deciduous forest.



Barred Owl - familiar for its distinctive "who-cooks-for-you, who-cooks-for-you-all" hooting. Habitat loss has impacted barred owl populations, with an overall decline.

STOP & THINK:

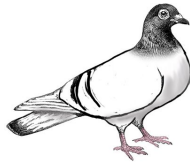
As you walk through Marvin Grove searching for raptors and other birds (below), notice the sculptural nest installations created by KU students. These pieces are reflections on how humans impact the environment and therefore avian species. As you view and engage with these artistic works, consider the message that each one tells. Spend time with the art installations and think about your relationship to nature.

Why are biodiversity and species richness important to you?

How might our world change if we could truly begin to address global climate change?

PIGEONS & RELATIVES:

How many can you find?



Rock Pigeon (or Rock Dove) - introduced into Kansas by settlers in the mid-19th century, rock pigeons quickly became feral. They are well-established especially in towns where there is adequate food including human trash, spilled grain, and bird feeders. Their population numbers are growing as our trash grows exponentially.



Mourning Dove - native to North America, the mourning dove is a popular game bird in the state of Kansas. Although most mourning doves migrate south by October, many remain in Kansas throughout the fall and some throughout the winter.

Cannot
Be Found



Passenger Pigeon - once the most abundant bird in North America (numbering in the billions), not a single passenger pigeon exists today. The species was hunted out of existence; the last bird died in 1914. You can see a taxidermy passenger pigeon on the 6th floor of the KU Natural History Museum when it is open to the public.

SONGBIRDS:

How many can you find?



White-breasted Nuthatch - adults are gray-blue on the back, with a frosty white face and underparts, and a black "cap" on the head. They get their common name from their habit of jamming large nuts and acorns into tree bark, then whacking them with their sharp bill to "hatch" out the seed from the inside.



Brown Thrasher - the only thrasher east of the Rocky Mountains and central Texas, these songbirds have a distinctive brown coloration. They spend most of their time near or on the ground, walking, running, or hopping. While fairly common, their numbers have been declining for the last several decades due to habitat loss.



Northern Cardinal - long-tailed songbird with a short, very thick bill, and a prominent crest. Males are brilliant red all over. Cardinals nest in dense foliage and look for conspicuous, fairly high perches for singing. Growth of towns and suburbs across eastern North America has helped the cardinal expand its range northward.