

Joseph J. Wunderlich  
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Ornithology

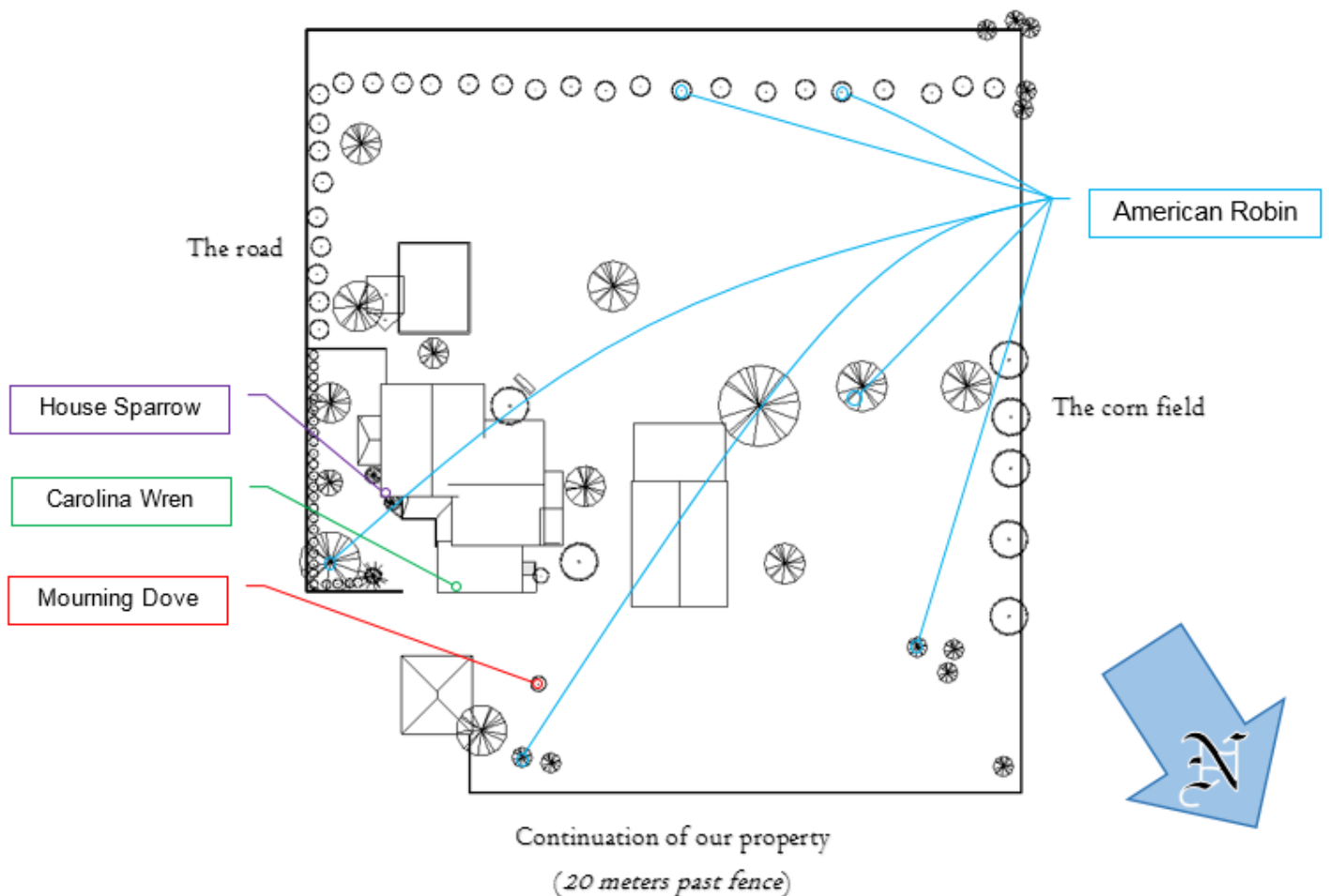
# Backyard Bird Species

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Seventeen years ago we moved into the house we live in today, and much has changed since then. For one, a second addition to our house has been built by my father and I which is nearly complete now. Second, and probably the most notable visible change from a distance is the dozens of trees my parents have planted since we moved here. Originally there were only 5 trees on our property, now we have well over 40. The addition of these trees was mostly for privacy concerns at first. My mother planted a wall of rocky mountain austrees around the perimeter of our property to offer shade, block the wind, as our house is on a small hill, and to block the view of a nearby landfill. These trees are already beginning to die off. Their lifespan is around 12-15 years. The rest of our yard is full of specimen trees such as a Japanese maple near our front porch and two Dogwoods in the front.






The biggest change thanks to our arboretum of a backyard was the new community of birds that have moved in with us. I've recently begun documenting exactly what species have taken refuge here and which are most common.

Here is a site plan of our house I drew in Revit, a 3d modeling software. I've marked the locations of each live nest I've found so far this spring.



## Identified species w/ details.

Here is an up-to-date list of all the known species of birds I have photographed so far on our property.

<p><b>American Robin</b> <i>Turdus migratorius</i> Adult, Male</p> <hr/> <p>Nests found: <b>5</b> This songbird is the most common inhabitant in our yard today, as well as the noisiest. I've found many nests in the trees lining our yard so far.</p>	
<p><b>American Goldfinch</b> <i>Carduelis tristis</i> Adult, Male</p> <hr/> <p>Nests found: <b>0</b> These birds are hard to come by. I still have not seen a nest/eggs belonging to one yet. They tend to stay low in bushes or the grass.</p>	
<p><b>Carolina Wren</b> <i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i> Adult, Male &amp; Female</p> <hr/> <p>Nests found: <b>1</b> Two wrens have claimed an old birdhouse in our shop. They sneak in and out through a broken window pane to feed their newborn hatchlings.</p>	
<p><b>Eurasian Blackbird (Common Blackbird)</b> <i>Turdus merula</i> Adult, Male</p> <hr/> <p>Nests found: <b>0</b> Spotted for a brief instance on a tree out back. I've seen some blackbirds in flocks while driving in the countryside or hiking.</p>	
<p><b>Gray Catbird</b> <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i> Adult, Male</p> <hr/> <p>Nests found: <b>0</b> I've spotted a few of these by their call which starts off in an alarming repetitive meow, which then transitioned to a random song.</p>	

## House Sparrow

*Passer domesticus*

Adult, Male

Nests found: **1**

I've seen several hanging around our barn and front yard. They typically dive and run, taking some birdseed. A nest was found in our gutter.



## Indigo Bunting

*Passerina cyanea*

Adult, Male

Nests found: **0**

Spotted near our front birdbath near a group of house sparrows.



## Mourning Dove

*Turdus migratorius*

Adult, Female

Nests found: **1**

The Doves in our yard have a distinct call that I hear some mornings along with the Cardinal's. I've been familiar with their call since I was a kid.



## Northern Cardinal

*Cardinalis cardinalis*

Adult, Male

Nests found: **0**

The cardinals can be seen passing through from time to time, usually to pick up some food from birdfeeders. Their call is loud and prominent.



## Red Winged Blackbird

*Agelaius phoeniceus*

Adult, Male & Female

Nests found: **0**

Spotted in a tall tree far beyond our back fence and past the corn field. They were both spotted chatting in the same tree.



As far as I can tell, the majority of birds in our back yard are eastern American songbirds, of which the American robin is most dominant. Near the fence are some unwanted mulberry trees, which seem to be preferred by the robins. The less common birds seem to enjoy our front yard's birdfeeders and exotic trees. Several nests that I am vaguely able to spot are simply out of reach, such as the tops of the austrees and inside the gutter on our roof. I may make some progress investigating these nests later when I can be certain I won't disrupt any bird families.

Interestingly, the male robins were always hostile toward me nearing their nests. Every time I would approach a full nest, I was almost immediately under alarm. It seems that even if a nest didn't belong to a particular parent, other robins would still protect that nest regardless. This kind of bird phycology may be why American Robins make up a huge fraction of the US bird population. I would consider the robin to be an invasive species at this point.

As for the less represented breeds, I believe that our house is merely a pass-through for traveling birds to take from our various birdfeeders. I also predict that the reason that there are so few non-robin nests here is due to the robins' hostility toward other birds and an aggressive security of their nests, as well as general aggressiveness towards everyone. Our back yard has sufficiently been claimed by the robins. Shown left is a live robin nest found inside the hollow center of our front pear tree.



While our backyard is essentially robin territory, our front belongs in part to the house sparrow population. Every morning it's a pretty consistent sight, groups of 2 to 6 sparrows pecking at the ground for leftover seeds. Occasionally the sparrows will fight off other birds that come too close to the front birdfeeder.

From what I have observed, the highest bird traffic areas in our yard are A. The trees in front, likely due to the proximity to the nearest forest southeast of us. B. The back tree line, as this is where birds can enter easily from the corn fields adjacent to our home. And C. The austrees on the left and right sides of our yard. These tall, lush, dense trees offer more than enough space for birds of all types to nest. To help encourage new species to start living here, I plan on building several birdhouses which I will plant on the trees near our back fence and on our large front pear tree, as well as hanging a new birdfeeder near our farthest row of trees near the field.



## Gallery

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Below is a slideshow of our most frequent visitors. Take notice of the personalities of each species.



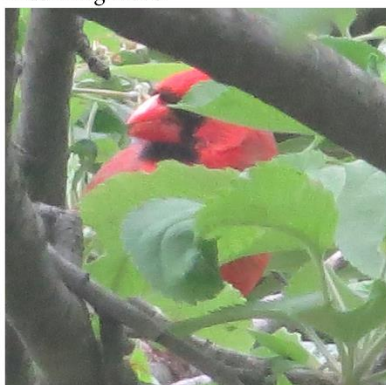
American Robin



American Goldfinch



Mourning Dove



Northern Cardinal



## Work Cited

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- All pictures & models copyright Joseph J. Wunderlich 2016
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