

The Best Features of Three FREE Bird Apps

BirdsEye Texas is an easy-to-use app that allows you to create and scroll through a mini field guide of the birds found at or around any place you select in Texas. Use this app to figure out what you can be looking for in your neighborhood or at a nearby park, with bar charts showing which birds should be around when. The app also provides lots of great photographs and will do a nice job of helping you ID an unknown bird. See directions below.

Merlin Bird ID is designed to help beginning birders ID birds – just answer a few questions and/or upload a photo to get the app’s best guesses. The app also has great sound recordings illustrated with awesome visual “spectrograms.” Select the Bird Pack for Texas/Oklahoma (or US/Canada) at download and pay attention to filter settings for location, date, and likelihood. **Please don’t play the sound recordings outside**, since they will distract and upset nearby birds.

Audubon Birds is a bit harder to use than BirdsEye and Merlin, but includes great species descriptions with info about size/markings, songs/calls, range/migration, conservation status, habitat, feeding behavior/diet, and nesting/eggs.

	BirdsEye Texas app (by Birds in the Hand)	Merlin Bird ID app (by Cornell Lab)	Audubon Birds app (by National Audubon)
Lists of nearby birds	Great	Limited “drill down”	Limited locations
Species bar charts	Great	Good	None
Range maps	Recent/Interactive	Annual/Non-interactive	Annual/Non-interactive
Photos	Great	Very Good	Good
Help with bird IDs	Great	Great	Great
Photo ID upload	None	Great	None
Bird sound recordings	None	Great	Great
Species descriptions	Limited	Limited	Great
Lists of similar birds	None	None	Great

How to use the BirdsEye Texas app (directions are for Android phones – iPhone navigation is similar):

1. Change your phone’s settings if needed so that it can ID your location.
2. Open the app and click on NEARBY (and then skip to step 5) or on BROWSE BY LOCATION.
3. Click on a red pin, or touch any part of the map for one second and then let go.
4. Click on the box that shows the location you’ve selected. Don’t panic if it says there are no recent sightings.
5. Click on the FILTER icon at the top right and change (if you want) the sliders for LOCAL SEARCH DISTANCE and/or SEARCH TIMEFRAME and then click SAVE at the top right. A search radius of 0 miles will produce a list of the birds seen at that specific location. A radius of 1 mile or 5 kilometers will add other nearby sightings.
6. The bar charts will show when and roughly how often each species has been seen within the search radius you selected throughout the past five years. The RECENT tab lists birds spotted within the SEARCH TIMEFRAME you selected. The NEARBY tab lists all birds sighted at any point in the past five years, except for a few domestic/feral species. (These almost “real time” lists are created from checklists that birders enter into the eBird database managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.)
7. Click on the BIRD PHOTO or CAMERA icon to view a lot of great photos, with age and gender stated as needed.
8. Click on a bar chart to see the red pins marking locations where the species has been sighted during the SEARCH TIMEFRAME. Zoom way out to see recent sightings around the world. Click on the BIRD HEAD icon at the lower right for a brief description. Click on the PIN icon at the bottom of the screen to return to the map.
9. Click on any of the red pins to get the location and timing of the most recent sighting. Click on the label to switch to the sightings for that location. Use your phone’s BACK button to return to prior screens.
10. Want more? From the Home Page, click SMART SEARCH to get ID help. Now go outside and have some fun!