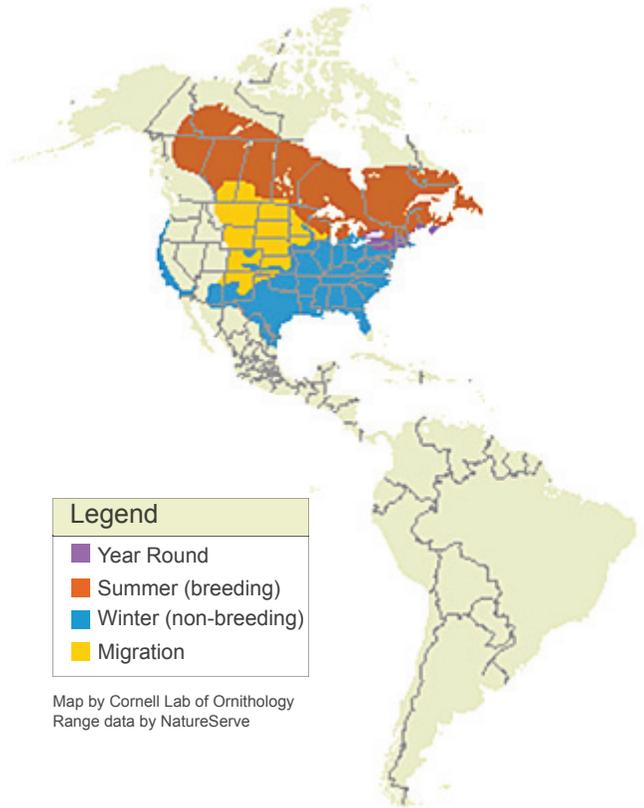


White-throated Sparrow

Zonotrichia albicollis

Crisp facial markings make the White-throated Sparrow an attractive bird as well as a hopping, flying anatomy lesson. There's the black eyestripe, the white crown and supercilium, the yellow lores, the white throat bordered by a black whisker, or malar stripe. They're also a great entrée into the world of birdsong, with their pretty, wavering whistle of Oh-sweet-canada. These forest sparrows breed mostly across Canada, but they're familiar winter birds across most of eastern and southern North America and California.



Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

The White-throated Sparrow is a large, full-bodied sparrow with a fairly prominent bill, rounded head, long legs, and long, narrow tail.

Color Pattern

White-throated Sparrows are brown above and gray below with a striking head pattern. The black-and-white-striped head is augmented by a bright white throat and yellow between the eye and the bill, which is gray. You'll also see a less boldly marked form, known as "tan-striped," with a buff-on-brown face pattern instead of white-on-black.

Behavior

White-throated Sparrows stay near the ground, scratching through leaves in search of food, often in flocks. You may see them low in bushes as well, particularly in spring when they eat fresh buds. White-throated Sparrows sing their distinctive songs frequently, even in winter

Habitat

Look for White-throated Sparrows in woods, at forest edges, in the regrowth that follows logging or forest fires, at pond and bog edges, and in copses near treeline. In winter you can find these birds in thickets, overgrown fields, parks, and woody suburbs. They readily come to backyards for birdseed

Cool Facts

- The White-throated Sparrow comes in two color forms: white-crowned and tan-crowned. The two forms are genetically determined, and they persist because individuals almost always mate with a bird of the opposite morph. Males of both color types prefer females with white stripes, but both kinds of females prefer tan-striped males. White-striped birds are more aggressive than tan-striped ones, and white-striped females may be able to outcompete their tan-striped sisters for tan-striped males.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 6.3 - 7.1 inches
- Wingspan - 7.1 - 9.1 inches
- Weight - 0.8 - 1.1 ounces