

Northern Flicker

Colaptes auratus

Northern Flickers are large, brown woodpeckers with a gentle expression and handsome black-scalloped plumage. On walks, don't be surprised if you scare one up from the ground. It's not where you'd expect to find a woodpecker, but flickers eat mainly ants and beetles, digging for them with their unusual, slightly curved bill. When they fly you'll see a flash of color in the wings – yellow if you're in the East, red if you're in the West – and a bright white flash on the rump.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Flickers are fairly large woodpeckers with a slim, rounded head, slightly downcurved bill, and long, flared tail that tapers to a point.

Color Pattern

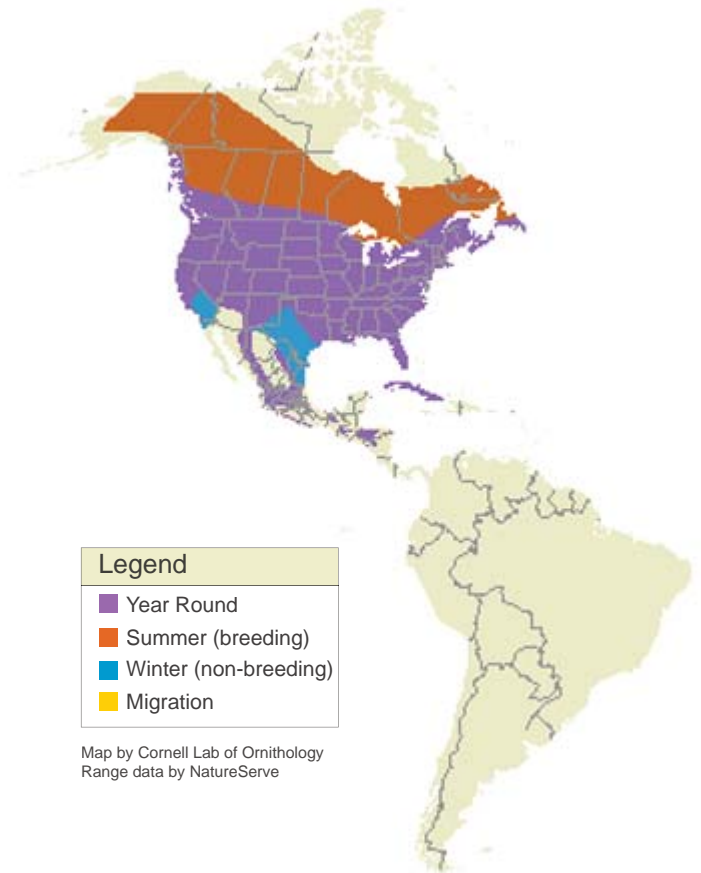
Flickers appear brownish overall with a white rump patch that's conspicuous in flight and often visible when perched. The undersides of the wing and tail feathers are bright yellow, for eastern birds, or red, in western birds. With a closer look you'll see the brown plumage is richly patterned with black spots, bars, and crescents.

Behavior

Northern Flickers spend lots of time on the ground, and when in trees they're often perched upright on horizontal branches instead of leaning against their tails on a trunk. They fly in an up-and-down path using heavy flaps interspersed with glides, like many woodpeckers.

Habitat

Look for flickers in open habitats near trees, including woodlands, edges, yards, and parks. In the West you can find them in mountain forests all the way up to treeline.



Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 11.0 - 12.2 inches
- Wingspan - 16.5 - 20.1 inches
- Weight - 3.9 - 5.6 ounces