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Kevin McDonough
Northern Michigan University, kmcdonou@nmu.edu

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All About Birds is a comprehensive resource for North American birds, bird watching, and bird conservation, produced by the renowned Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The primary attraction is the bird guide, which provides information on approximately 585 of the 700+ North American bird species. Designed for the general public, the bird guide is searchable by common names. The search engine and ranking algorithm are fairly robust. A search on chickadees retrieved the most common species first, the black-capped chickadee, and also effectively accommodated non-hyphenated entries. A second access point is through browsing by common name or bird shapes. This option isn't implemented as well as it could be. The design of the page includes an A-Z list of letters across the top and a shape guide set to the left side of the page. Once you make a selection, the species names are crammed into the right side of the page, but in expanded form that include direct links to sections within a species' page. Since the original navigation remains, you often have to scroll through several screens to find a specific bird. The final access point is provided through browsing by taxonomic order, which is made more accessible by including common name labels, e.g. Nightjars, Owls, etc.

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Once viewing an entry, you are presented with a picture of the bird, a brief overview, and a range map. Additional information is organized under four tabs: Identification, Life History, Sound, and Video. How much information you receive depends on whether a species has an expanded entry. As of November 2012 only 133 species have expanded descriptions, up from 51 species in 2009. In expanded entries, identification features are consistently described within four categories—size and shape, color pattern, behavior, and habitat—rather than via individual points. The life history sections—cool facts, habitat, food, nesting, behavior, and conservation status—are explained in more detail. Life history information for non-expanded entries is often reduced to simple labeled icons, for example, nectar listed under the food source for the blue-throated hummingbird. Also, limited entries have less, if any videos, fewer sound recordings and pictures of field identification marks, and less extras overall. The expanded entries for the most popular birds are really quite wonderful, less so for other species. For either entry types, links are provided to related and similar species, which helps when trying to identify a species observed in your backyard, and a limited bibliography (1-3 sources) is offered for further reading.

Compared to Cornell Lab's subscription product—Birds of North America (Cornell Lab of Ornithology, n.d.)—All About Birds offers less of everything. However, for a free resource it is quite nice. The design is attractive, with many color images. Besides the bird guide, there is information on birding basics, which offers keys to identifying birds, how to attract birds to your yard, considerations for taking better photographs, and more. Each page provides additional reading and links to other resources. Finally, All About Birds, includes the online version of Living Birds, the Cornell Lab's award winning quarterly publication. Living Bird provides articles on ornithology and birding, reviews of equipment, and tips for improving your birding skills.

In summary, if you are a serious birder, or have likeminded patrons, and want detailed information on the biology and life history of individual species, with expanded vocalizations, videos, and substantial links to primary literature, subscribe to Birds of North America (Cornell Lab of Ornithology, n.d.). The cost is surprisingly low for the value you receive. For everyone else who wants to know more about the bird they observed at their feeder, or have a nascent interest in birding, All About Birds is more than sufficient. Although it would be nice if there were more expanded entries, updates will occur over time.

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