

Editor's Note

One of the reasons I enjoy being editor of *English Teaching Forum* is that I learn new things as I edit articles for the journal. Working on this issue taught me some things I hadn't known about birds. As a city dweller, I have not been in the habit of watching birds. Of course, I've noticed them from time to time, usually when one was poking around near where I was walking or a pigeon landed by a park bench I was on. But birds generally have not captured my attention.

However, editing this issue's feature article about birds, searching for photos to illustrate that article, and talking with a colleague who loves birds (and wrote the Classroom Activities about them) raised my awareness of these creatures. Now I pay more attention to birds. I might go to the window when I hear a bird call, trying to see if I can find it among the tree branches and, if I can, whether I can tell what kind of bird it is. Walking down the street, I look up into the trees when I hear birds singing above me. (Honestly, I'm still not very good at spotting the birds.)

This newfound interest in birds might impel me to go online to check on the Great Backyard Bird Count (see page 42) taking place in February. I encourage our readers to go to www.birdcount.org to monitor the bird counters' findings, too. The purpose of the bird count is to collect data on winter bird populations. (I don't think I'd like to be out in the cold counting birds, but it must be easier to see them with the leaves off the trees.)

Because I am not a fan of winter, the bird I most like to see is the robin (also known as the American robin), one of the most common birds in the United States. The robin is popular in the northern climate where I grew up because robins have the good sense to migrate to milder climates during the winter, and their return to the north signals the onset of spring. (It's probably no coincidence that the three states that chose the robin as their state bird—Connecticut, Michigan, and Wisconsin—all have cold winters.) After months of snowy weather, I was always happy to look out the window and see a robin hopping around the lawn hunting for earthworms. It was a sign of hope after a long winter.

My hope for our readers is that they will enjoy learning about birds in reading this issue as much as I enjoyed learning about them while I edited it.

—MK



American robin