

The Northern Cardinal

Named the official bird of 7 U.S. states it's the northern cardinal. You can even see this bird in the video game with the birds that smash pig structures. This non-migratory bird is a favorite of backyard bird watchers not only because of its pretty song, but because of the male's beautiful red plumage. A cool thing about these birds is that both the males and females sing. Typically, when the female sings though, it's from their nest and it's because she needs more food. Speaking of eating: these feathered friends are usually the first to visit bird feeders in the morning and the last ones to leave in the evening. These critters are listed as Least Concern by the IUCN.



The Stats...

Scientific name: *Cardinalis cardinalis*

Weight: Up to 1.5 ounces

Length: Up to 9.3 inches

Wingspan: Up to 12.2 inches

Lifespan: Up to 15 years

- 1.) Northern cardinals are granivores (eat primarily seeds). Their beaks have specifically evolved to crack open the hulls on seeds and shells on nuts.
- 2.) The 7 states that boast the northern cardinal as their state bird are: Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- 3.) Their name dates back to the time of the U.S. founding colonists, coming from the similarity of the males' red feathers to the red biretta and vestments of Catholic cardinals.
- 4.) On occasions, the bright red plumage is replaced by golden yellow or orange. This is called xanthochroism.
- 5.) The cardinal's call sounds as though they're saying "birdie, birdie, birdie" or "cheer, cheer, cheer."
- 6.) They represent the Arizona Cardinals NFL team and the St. Louis Cardinals MLB team.
- 7.) Like Canadian geese, it isn't uncommon for them to violently and relentlessly "wage war" with their own image for hours in mirrors, windows, or anything that displays their reflection.

Did you know...?

The Northern Cardinal has also been introduced in Southern California and Hawaii. However, the small population in California is in danger of disappearing due to habitat loss.

- 8.) Northern cardinals are monogamous (mate for life).
- 9.) Virginia Nightingale or Winter Redbird are 2 other aliases of the northern cardinal.
- 10.) Cardinals molt at least once a year to replace damaged feathers. During this time they look terrible. But this appearance is short-lived.
- 11.) During courtship, the males will feed their females seeds in a method known as "beak to beak".
- 12.) Once the eggs have hatched, the male and female will take care of feeding their nestlings.

The Questions...

1.) Cardinals are the official bird of how many states?

2.) What is the IUCN status of northern cardinals?

3.) Northern cardinals are carnivores. True or False.

4.) What states have the northern cardinal as their state bird?

5.) There are 2 professional sports teams that have the name of this bird. What are they?

6.) Name the 2 states the cardinal has been introduced to.

7.) How often do northern cardinals molt?

8.) What are 2 other names northern cardinals go by?

9.) What happens if a cardinal sees its reflection in a mirror?

10.) In what is called xanthocroism, what happens to a cardinal's feathers?

11.) Only the female takes care of their young. True or False.

12.) What is the wingspan of a northern cardinal?

13.) Do these birds migrate for the winter?