Feather Identification Chart

26 birds with a photo, the one feature that separates each, and its size. Free to reuse with a link to orvik.app/tools/feather-identifier/

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In the United States it is illegal to possess the feathers of almost any native bird

1



Wild turkey

Big, stiff and boldly barred black and white on the wing

`Size: Wing 25–40 cm; tail 30–40 cm`

2



Canada goose

Plain grey-brown flight feathers with a paler edge and a slightly waxy feel, and a great deal of grey down

`Size: Wing 20–30 cm`

3

No open-licence photo that passed review

Mallard

The give-away is the speculum feather: a patch of iridescent blue-purple bordered with a crisp white bar at both ends

`Size: Wing 10–20 cm`

4

No open-licence photo that passed review

Mourning dove

Soft grey-brown, with the outer tail feathers showing a black bar and a broad white tip

`Size: Wing 10–15 cm`

5



Rock pigeon

Grey with a broad dark bar near the tip on many wing feathers, and neck feathers with a green and magenta iridescence

`Size: Wing 12–20 cm`

6



American crow

Uniformly black with a faint purple gloss in sunlight, and a fanned tip on the outer flight feathers where the vane…

`Size: Wing 20–30 cm`

7



Blue jay

Bright blue barred with black and tipped white — one of the most recognisable feathers in North America

`Size: 10–15 cm`

8



Northern cardinal

Solid deep red on males, dull olive-brown with red edges on females

`Size: 7–12 cm`

9



Red-tailed hawk

HANDLE WITH CARE

Tail feathers are brick-red above, often with a single dark band near the tip

`Size: Wing 25–40 cm; tail 20–25 cm`

10



Great horned owl

HANDLE WITH CARE

Softly mottled grey-brown with fine barring, and — the diagnostic feature — a comb of stiff serrations along the…

`Size: Wing 25–40 cm`

11



Northern flicker

Brown barred black with the shaft and the underside of the vane a bright lemon yellow in the east or salmon red in…

`Size: 10–16 cm`

12



Pileated woodpecker

Sooty black with a clean white base to the inner web, and very stiff pointed tail feathers with a sharply worn tip —…

`Size: 15–25 cm`

13



European starling

Glossy black with green and purple iridescence and small buff-white spots at the tips in winter plumage

`Size: 4–10 cm`

14



Red-winged blackbird

Matt black flight feathers

`Size: 8–13 cm`

15



American robin

Slate-grey wing and tail feathers, often with a small white spot at the tip of the outer tail feathers, and warm…

`Size: 7–13 cm`

16



Ring-necked pheasant

Extremely long, narrow, pointed tail feathers, warm buff-brown with strong regularly spaced black bars

`Size: Tail 25–60 cm`

17



Great blue heron

HANDLE WITH CARE

Long, broad, plain blue-grey flight feathers, and distinctive powder-down body feathers that disintegrate into a fine…

`Size: Wing 25–40 cm`

18



Ring-billed and herring gull

Clean white with a pale grey outer vane and, on the outer primaries, a black tip with a small white mirror spot

`Size: 15–30 cm`

19



Wood duck

The flank feathers are the famous ones: buff with fine black barring and a bold black-and-white crescent at the tip,…

`Size: 8–15 cm`

20



Barred owl

HANDLE WITH CARE

Boldly barred brown and white with the same soft velvety texture and serrated leading edge as other owls

`Size: 18–30 cm`

21



Common grackle

Black with a strong bronze, purple or blue-green iridescence depending on the angle

`Size: 10–18 cm`

22

No open-licence photo that passed review

Peafowl

The eyed train feather needs no key

`Size: Train feathers 100–150 cm`

23



Cedar waxwing

Soft silky fawn-grey with a bright yellow band across the tail tip and, on some feathers, a red waxy tip like a drop…

`Size: 5–9 cm`

24



Downy and hairy woodpecker

Crisp black and white — flight feathers spotted or checked white on black, and stiff pointed black tail feathers with…

`Size: 5–12 cm`

25



Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawk

HANDLE WITH CARE

Slate-grey or brown above with three to five bold dark bands across a paler underside

`Size: 12–25 cm`

26

No open-licence photo that passed review

Song sparrow, house finch and other small songbirds

Small, brown, streaked and, in practice, not identifiable to species from a single feather

`Size: 3–8 cm`

Photo credits. Every photo was checked against the entry before use; 22 of 26 entries have one.

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5. Rock pigeon — Cas Colangelo, CC BY 4.0, iNaturalist
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