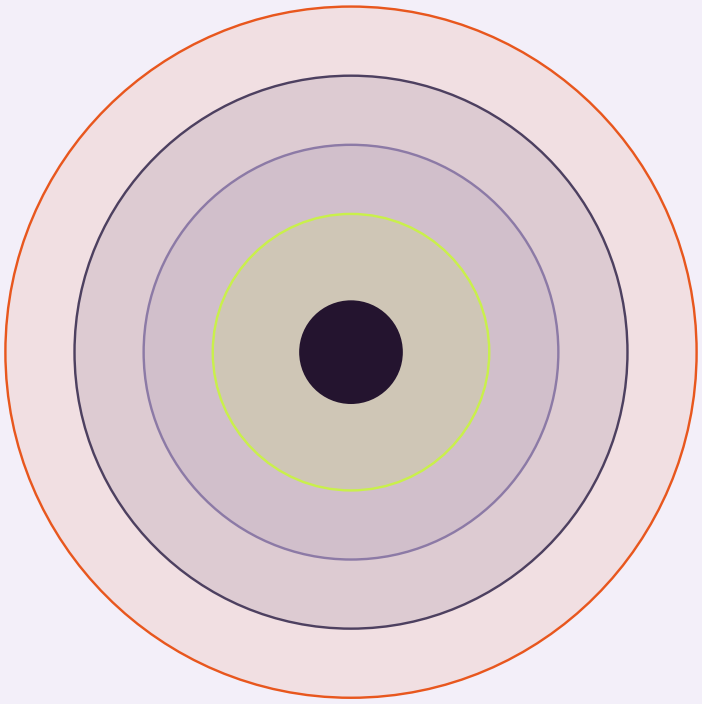


# Extremely Accurate Birds: An Anatomically Precise Field Guide to Common

# Backyard Birds of North America

A reading of the book by Tommy Siegel (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Extremely Accurate Birds: An Anatomically Precise Field Guide to Common Backyard Birds of North America, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

# The book in a minute

Extremely Accurate Birds is a humorous field guide to common backyard birds of North America by Tommy Siegel, a member of the band Jukebox the Ghost, a New Yorker cartoonist and the creator of the Candy Hearts comics. Running Press, part of Hachette, published it in hardcover on April 14, 2026. The joke starts from a habit of classic field guides such as Audubon and Sibley, which reduce a bird's legs to simple sticks. Siegel draws each bird with a detailed, accurate upper body and gives it human legs and a human backside underneath. The book covers more than 80 species and includes birding tips alongside the drawings. In an interview with the Chicago Bird Alliance, Siegel described himself as an intermediate birder and called the book a “Trojan Horse”: a way to get people to care more about the natural world around them through humour. With Billy Libby he also hosts a podcast called Extremely Accurate Bird Songs.

Below are the 7 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

# The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### A joke can be the door that gets someone to care about the natural world.

In an interview with the Chicago Bird Alliance, Siegel called the book a “Trojan Horse” to get people to care more about the natural world around them through humour. The laugh gets the book into your hands; the birds are what you are left holding.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Look closely at what the field guide simplified.

Classic guides such as Audubon and Sibley reduce birds' legs to simple sticks. The whole book grows out of noticing that one shortcut. Every guide, map and summary leaves something out, and finding the missing part is a way of really looking.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### The absurd part only works because the rest is right.

Siegel's birds have detailed, accurate upper bodies above their human legs. The joke lands because the bird on top is drawn with care. Getting the serious part right is what earns you the silly part.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### You do not have to be an expert to share what you love.

Siegel describes himself as an intermediate birder, and he made a field guide anyway. Being a beginner in public, and saying so, gives other beginners permission to start.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### The nearest wildlife is already in your backyard.

The book is a guide to common backyard birds, not rare ones. Nature you can notice does not need a trip or special gear, only a few minutes of attention at a window or on a walk.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Come to nature through whatever you already love doing.

Siegel is a musician and a cartoonist, and his ways into birds are drawings, jokes and a podcast with Billy Libby called Extremely Accurate Bird Songs. Your way in can be your own: a sketchbook, a camera, a list or a walk.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## A book can make you laugh and still teach you something.

Alongside the jokes, the book covers more than 80 species and includes birding tips. Silly and useful are not opposites, and a reader who is laughing is still learning.

PUT IT TO WORK

# Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Learn three backyard birds by sight
- [ ] Put out water
- [ ] Start a yard list
- [ ] Learn one call
- [ ] Join a local bird group or count

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Spend ten minutes at a window
- ◯ Draw a bird badly, on purpose
- ◯ Tally what you actually saw

30 days · Nov 13 - Dec 12, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

# Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

# The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 13 - Dec 12, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

# The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

## Learn three backyard birds by sight

Pick the three birds you see most often near home.

Learn one field mark for each, such as a colour patch, a wing bar or a tail shape, until you can name them without looking anything up.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

## Put out water

Set a shallow dish or saucer of clean water where you can see it from a window.

Keep it shallow, rinse it and refill it every few days, and watch who comes to drink and bathe.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

## Start a yard list

Give one notebook page or phone note the title Yard list.

Write down every kind of bird you see from home, with the date you first saw it. It only ever grows.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

## Learn one call

Choose one bird you already know by sight and learn its call or song from a recording.

The next time you hear it outside, you will know who is there before you see it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

## Join a local bird group or count

Look up a local bird club, nature centre walk or community bird count near you and sign up for one outing.

Beginners are usually welcome, and other people's eyes find birds you would miss.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

# Spend ten minutes at a window

Once a day, stand or sit at a window for ten minutes with your phone face down.

Nov 13 - Dec 12, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 ○ | 14 ○ | 15 ○ |
| 16 ○ | 17 ○ | 18 ○ | 19 ○ | 20 ○ | 21 ○ | 22 ○ |
| 23 ○ | 24 ○ | 25 ○ | 26 ○ | 27 ○ | 28 ○ | 29 ○ |
| 30 ○ | | | | | | |

## December 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 ○ | 2 ○ | 3 ○ | 4 ○ | 5 ○ | 6 ○ |
| 7 ○ | 8 ○ | 9 ○ | 10 ○ | 11 ○ | 12 ○ | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

# Draw a bird badly, on purpose

Once a week, spend five minutes sketching a bird you saw, as roughly as you like.

Nov 13 - Dec 12, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 ○ | 14 ○ | 15 ○ |
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## December 2026

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| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

# Tally what you actually saw

At the end of the day, use the backyard tally on this page to count the birds you really saw, under whatever names you gave them.

Nov 13 - Dec 12, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 ○ | 14 ○ | 15 ○ |
| 16 ○ | 17 ○ | 18 ○ | 19 ○ | 20 ○ | 21 ○ | 22 ○ |
| 23 ○ | 24 ○ | 25 ○ | 26 ○ | 27 ○ | 28 ○ | 29 ○ |
| 30 ○ | | | | | | |

## December 2026

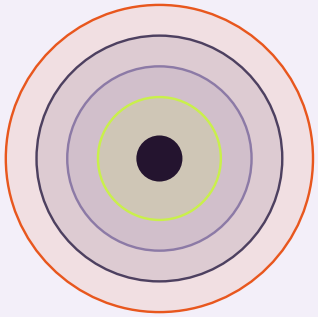
| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 ○ | 2 ○ | 3 ○ | 4 ○ | 5 ○ | 6 ○ |
| 7 ○ | 8 ○ | 9 ○ | 10 ○ | 11 ○ | 12 ○ | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



# The most accurate bird is the one outside your window. Go and look at it, legs and all.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER TOMMY SIEGEL

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Read it online, and vote on the takeaways: hourlife.com/books/extremely-accurate-birds
Made November 13, 2026 · HourLife, hourlife.com

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