

# Gray Catbird

# Gray Catbird

## Appearance

Medium-size gray bird, sleek looking with long rounded tail. Rufous undertail. Black cap. In some instances, they can look like they have a “potbelly.” Very vocal; can imitate other birds. Often makes a “Mew” sound, like a kitten. Difficult to tell male from female.



Sleek gray bird with black cap and rufous undertail.



Gray bird with black cap. In some instances, can show a “potbelly.”

# Gray Catbird

## Appearance

Immature Gray Catbirds tend to look a bit bedraggled and have fluffy, soft feathers.



Immature Gray Catbird

# Gray Catbird Sounds

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/>

## SONGS

The Gray Catbird mimics other sounds and birds and will put these sounds together to form their own song. During mating season, the male Gray Catbird will sing loud on top of a bush or tree to claim his territory. The female Gray Catbird will sing softly back to the male. Males will sing softly when near their nest.

## CALLS

The Gray Catbird will give a feline-like “Mewing” call, hence the name Catbird.

Listen to the songs and calls at:

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Gray\\_Catbird/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Gray_Catbird/sounds)

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## Diet

The Gray Catbird feeds on a wide variety of berries and insects. They will eat berries up in shrubs and trees. They will forage on the ground, turning over dead leaves looking for any type of insects. Nestlings are fed almost entirely on insects.



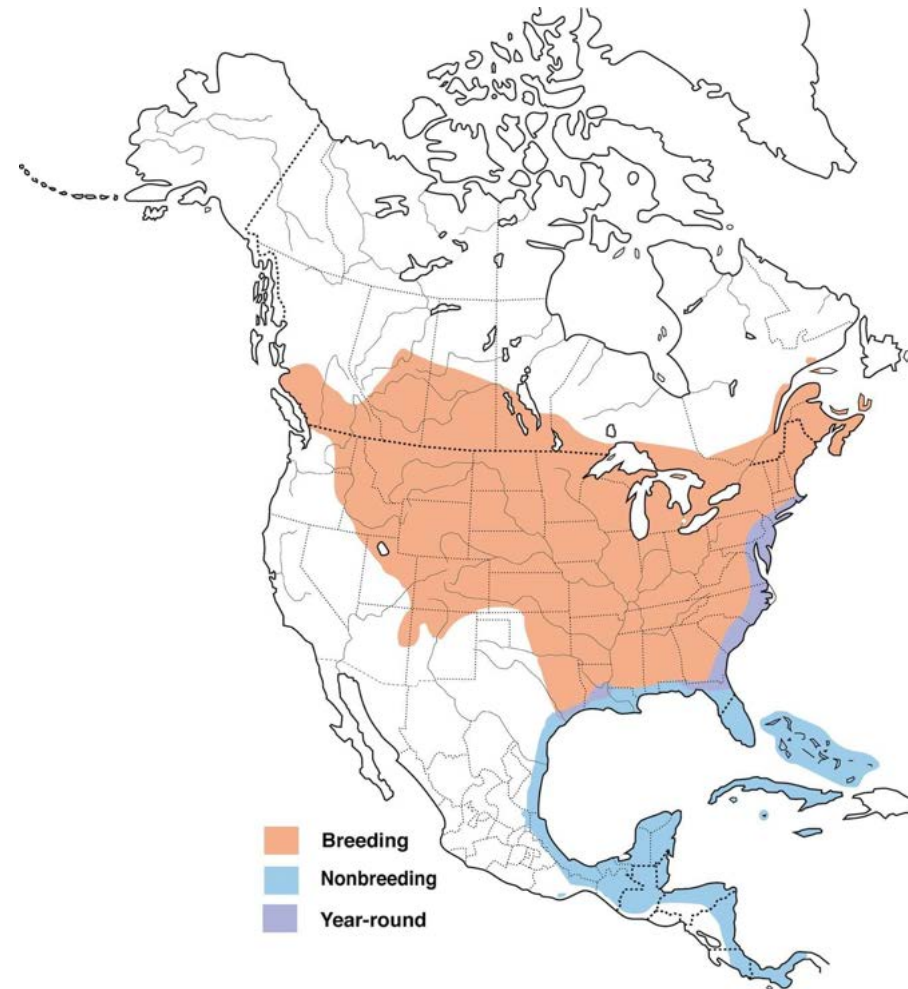
In early summer, will eat mostly insects, including spiders and moths.



In fall and winter, they will eat many kinds of berries.

# Gray Catbird Range

Gray Catbirds from across North America spend their winters along the Gulf Coast.



# Gray Catbird

## Habitat

Gray Catbirds like dense shrubs and small trees and vines along forest edges and streamline thickets.



Gray Catbird in a thicket



Gray Catbird in dense foliage in woods



Gray Catbird on top of shrub or bush

# Gray Catbird Behavior

Male Catbirds are territorial during the spring and summer. They will sing from prominent perches and chase away intruders, including other birds. You will usually find a Gray Catbird hopping through low vegetation or flying short distances from shrub to shrub or tree. Gray Catbirds are doting parents and have the ability to recognize and remove eggs of the brood parasite, the Brown-headed Cowbird.



Gray Catbird on alert for intruders



GRAY CATBIRD NEST WITH TWO CATBIRD EGGS AND ONE EGG OF BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD. THE LATTER IS LIKELY TO BE EJECTED SOON.



## Gray Catbird Literature/Prose

### *Catbird*

by Mary Oliver

His black cap gives him a jaunty look, for which we humans have learned to tilt our caps, in envy. When he is not singing, he is listening. Neither have I ever seen him with his eyes closed. Though he may be looking at nothing more than a cloud it brings to his mind several dozen new remarks. From one branch to another, or across the path, he dazzles with flight.



## Gray Catbird Feeders

Gray Catbirds will eat an assortment of food.  
Besides birdseed and suet, they can be enticed with grape jelly.



# Gray Catbird

## Names

### Common name

#### Gray Catbird

The Gray Catbird is a fairly common bird in the Midwest and eastern states. The Gray Catbird belongs in the family of Mockingbirds and Thrashers.

*Gray* refers to the predominant color of its body.

*Cat* refers to the “mewing” call it makes.



### Scientific name

*Dumetella carolinensis*

*Dumetella carolinensis* describes the Catbird habitat and origin.

*Dumetella* is based on the Latin term *dumas*, meaning “thorny thicket” or “small thornbush-dweller.”

*carolinensis* is New Latin for “from the Carolinas.”

