

# School-to-Nature



## Cardinal

Cardinals are present in North and South America, except for very cold climate areas. These colorful birds are named after the red robes worn by some Catholic religious leaders who are also called cardinals.

These birds are members of the Grosbeak family, which refers to their rounded, seed-crushing beaks. They are related to other grosbeaks, sparrows, and finches who all share similar beaks. Males are bright red and black; females are olive-gold with red markings.

They are so beautiful that some people kept them in cages, until 1918, when it was made illegal to cage them. Their popularity and beauty have made cardinals the state bird of 7 states: Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia.

Cardinals eat weed seeds, sunflower seeds, cracked corn, grains, berries, fruit, sap, beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, spiders, caterpillars, butterflies and moths. At backyard bird feeders their favorite purchased foods are black sunflower seed and safflower seed.

When Cardinals court before mating, the male offers seeds to the female. If she accepts and eats the seeds, they are a pair. Cardinals nest in shrubs, usually laying 3 eggs. Eggs hatch 11 to 13 days after being laid. Both parents care for the chicks for a month or two, even after chicks leave the nest. Cardinals may nest more than one time per season depending in the weather.

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