

Mecklenburg Audubon Society

Birding 101: Bird Topography



Everyone knows it is helpful to have a map when traveling to new places [or at least some of us do]. Well the same thing holds true for birding. It is important to understand the geography of a bird to identify it correctly.

The bird identification books tend to use terms referring to different parts of the bird's body to describe the bird such as - the bird has two white wing-bars or the eye-ring is broken. While looking at the picture in the book it seems obvious. But when you are in the field it will be important to know if the yellow on that warbler is on the breast or the belly. Where exactly does the breast stop and the belly begin anyway???

Here is a bird map that might help you begin to learn the parts of a birds body. As you can see it's a composite but I think it still does a good job of showing what's where. And you are more likely to remember this picture than some of the 'official' ones in the ID books. Study hard.

