

# FOCUS

# Wild Arizona

## Key Words:

**Bar Graph:** a graph that uses bars of different heights to represent information

**Graph:** a visual representation or picture of data, often showing how two or more items compare to each other

**Horizontal:** a flat line that runs left to right

**Legislature:** the government body that makes the laws in a state

**Symbol:** an item or object that stands for or represents another object

**Vertical:** a line that runs up and down

In 1931, the **Legislature** selected the cactus wren to be the official state bird of Arizona. As the state bird, the cactus wren would serve as a **symbol** of Arizona. But why? What is so special about the cactus wren?

Most wrens are small and shy. The cactus wren is different. It is North America's largest wren, up to 9 inches



GEORGE ANDREJKO

The cactus wren is Arizona's state bird.

State Birds			
STATE	BIRD	STATE	BIRD
Alabama	Yellowhammer	Montana	Western meadowlark
Alaska	Willow ptarmigan	Nebraska	Western meadowlark
Arizona	Cactus wren	Nevada	Mountain bluebird
Arkansas	Northern mockingbird	New Hampshire	Purple finch
California	California quail	New Jersey	Eastern goldfinch
Colorado	Lark bunting	New Mexico	Greater roadrunner
Connecticut	Robin	New York	Eastern bluebird
Delaware	Blue hen chicken	North Carolina	Northern cardinal
Florida	Northern mockingbird	North Dakota	Western meadowlark
Georgia	Brown thrasher	Ohio	Northern cardinal
Hawaii	Nene	Oklahoma	Scissor-tailed flycatcher
Idaho	Mountain bluebird	Oregon	Western meadowlark
Illinois	Northern cardinal	Pennsylvania	Ruffed grouse
Indiana	Northern cardinal	Rhode Island	Rhode Island red
Iowa	Eastern goldfinch	South Carolina	Carolina wren
Kansas	Western meadowlark	South Dakota	Ring-necked pheasant
Kentucky	Northern cardinal	Tennessee	Northern mockingbird
Louisiana	Brown pelican	Texas	Northern mockingbird
Maine	Black-capped chickadee	Utah	California gull
Maryland	Baltimore oriole	Vermont	Hermit thrush
Massachusetts	Black-capped chickadee	Virginia	Northern cardinal
Michigan	American robin	Washington	Willow goldfinch
Minnesota	Common loon	West Virginia	Northern cardinal
Mississippi	Northern mockingbird	Wisconsin	American robin
Missouri	Eastern bluebird	Wyoming	Western meadowlark

long. It is easily identified by the white stripe above each eye and the distinctive “chug-chug-chug” song, which sounds a lot like a car trying to start. Often found in populated areas, it will defend its nest with loud calls and “barks.” It builds a large, football-shaped nest in the branches of cacti. A small opening in the side of the nest

protects chicks from predators. The cactus wren often builds more than one nest, making it difficult for predators to know which is the “real” nest.

Although we do not know the exact reasons why the cactus wren was selected, it is a truly unique bird that serves as an excellent representative of Arizona. But what about the other states? What birds have they chosen?

By Eric Proctor

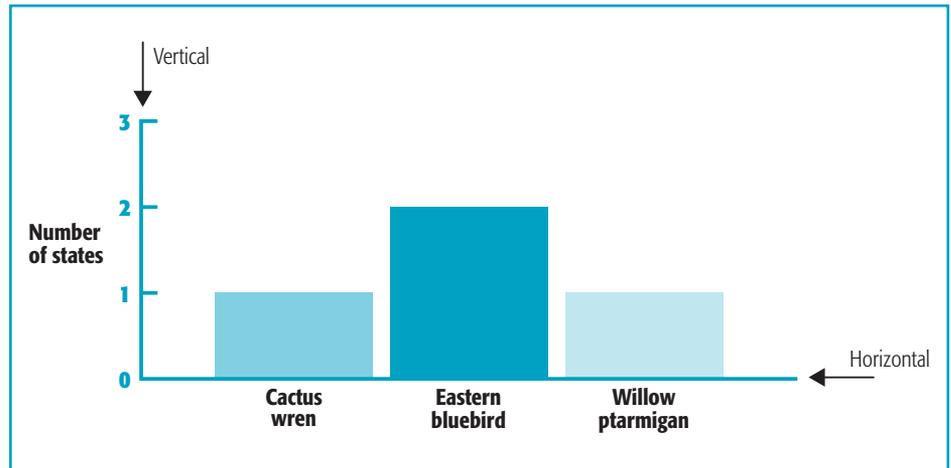
## Do the Math:

The “State Birds” table shows the official bird for each state. As you look at the list, you will notice that some birds represent more than one state. But what if we wanted to know which bird represents the most states? What would be the easiest way to get this information?

Well, we could look through the table, trying to count and remember each bird. But that could take a lot of time. Plus, every time we asked a new question, we would have to start all over again! Another way would be to create a **graph**. A graph allows us to see the data as a picture instead of as words. We can look at this “picture” and answer many different questions.

Graphs come in many different forms. Sometimes they are circles or lines. Sometimes they use images. Using some data from the table, we created a small example of a graph.

This is a **bar graph**. Notice the names of different birds are on the bottom. The numbers on the left represent the total number of states. The colored bars above each bird indicate how many states have made that bird their official state bird. From the graph, we can see only one state has named the cactus wren its bird, but two states have named the Eastern bluebird. How many have chosen the willow ptarmigan?



But this graph doesn't show all the data. It is up to you to complete it. So, get some paper and crayons. To start, make a really large “L” on your paper. Along the **vertical** line place the numbers 1 through 10 in order, with the highest number at the top. Space them about an inch from each other. Now, look through the table of state birds. Start listing the names of birds along the **horizontal** line. Each time you see a bird's name, make the bar above that bird taller.

**Example:** You notice that Arkansas' state bird is the Northern mockingbird. So, you write “Northern mockingbird” along the bottom of your graph. This is the first time you have seen this name, so color the bar up to the “1.” As you move down the list, you see that Florida has the same state bird. At this point, you do not

need to write “mockingbird” again. Instead, make the bar higher, coloring it all the way to “2.” If you see “mockingbird” again, move the color up to “3” and so on.

Once you have completed the graph, take a look. What do you see? What is your “picture” showing you?

### Answer the following questions:

1. How many different birds serve as state symbols?
2. How many birds represent more than one state?
3. Which bird represents the most states?

Now that you know how to graph, keep practicing. With help from your parent or teacher, research other state symbols. Can you graph state flowers, trees or mammals? Do you think the graphs would look like the bird graph? 🦋

■ This feature is part of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Focus Wild Arizona program, a free

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