

Extensive repertoire of a Northern Mockingbird: On 9 May 1992 while visiting an area known as The Valley on the south side of Syracuse, New York, I heard and observed a Northern Mockingbird mimicking the following species of birds: Rufous-sided Towhee, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Flicker, Northern Cardinal, Willow Flycatcher, Red-winged Blackbird, Tufted Titmouse, Barn Swallow, Killdeer, Gray Catbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Eastern Kingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Warbling Vireo, Northern Oriole, American Kestrel, Wood Thrush, Purple Martin, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Bluebird, and White-breasted Nuthatch. It also gave normal mockingbird calls. The species mimicked are listed as initially heard and written down and do not follow A.O.U. Check-list order. The "runthroughs", as I call them, that followed after the initial list was made were not always in the same order. The changes from one species's song to the next were random as far as I could tell. The calls imitated were not the entire call but portions of songs and calls.

Some species were executed better than others. The best done calls were the American Kestrel, Northern Cardinal and the Red-winged Blackbird. I made it a point to observe the bird or know where it was perched all the time while I was listening and writing the list of mimicked species to satisfy myself that all these calls were from the same source. I did observe a perched European Starling nearby and satisfied myself that the calls were not from that bird when it flew off because the calls continued from the same location where the mockingbird was perched high in a tree top. The fact that many of the species imitated do not normally occur in that particular area consisting of developed homes with some small woods and brushy land nearby, was even more astounding. This bird must have learned many of these calls on its wintering grounds and or in migration. The species which most surprised me was the Willow Flycatcher, which occurs in low numbers in Syracuse. When I heard the Eastern Phoebe, I would not have been surprised also to have heard the Eastern Wood-Pewee. That call was not in this bird's repertoire. The bird was observed and heard off and on after the initial listing from about 1200 to 1500 hours, each time with amazement on my part. Somehow this bird was able in a random fashion to imitate portions of twenty three other species of bird calls that it has heard at some point in time:

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[All of the mimicked species, except Tufted Titmouse, were found nesting in Syracuse during the New York breeding bird atlas field work period, although many were very local in distribution; Tufted Titmouse has since increased in numbers in the Syracuse area and may now nest locally — The Editor.]