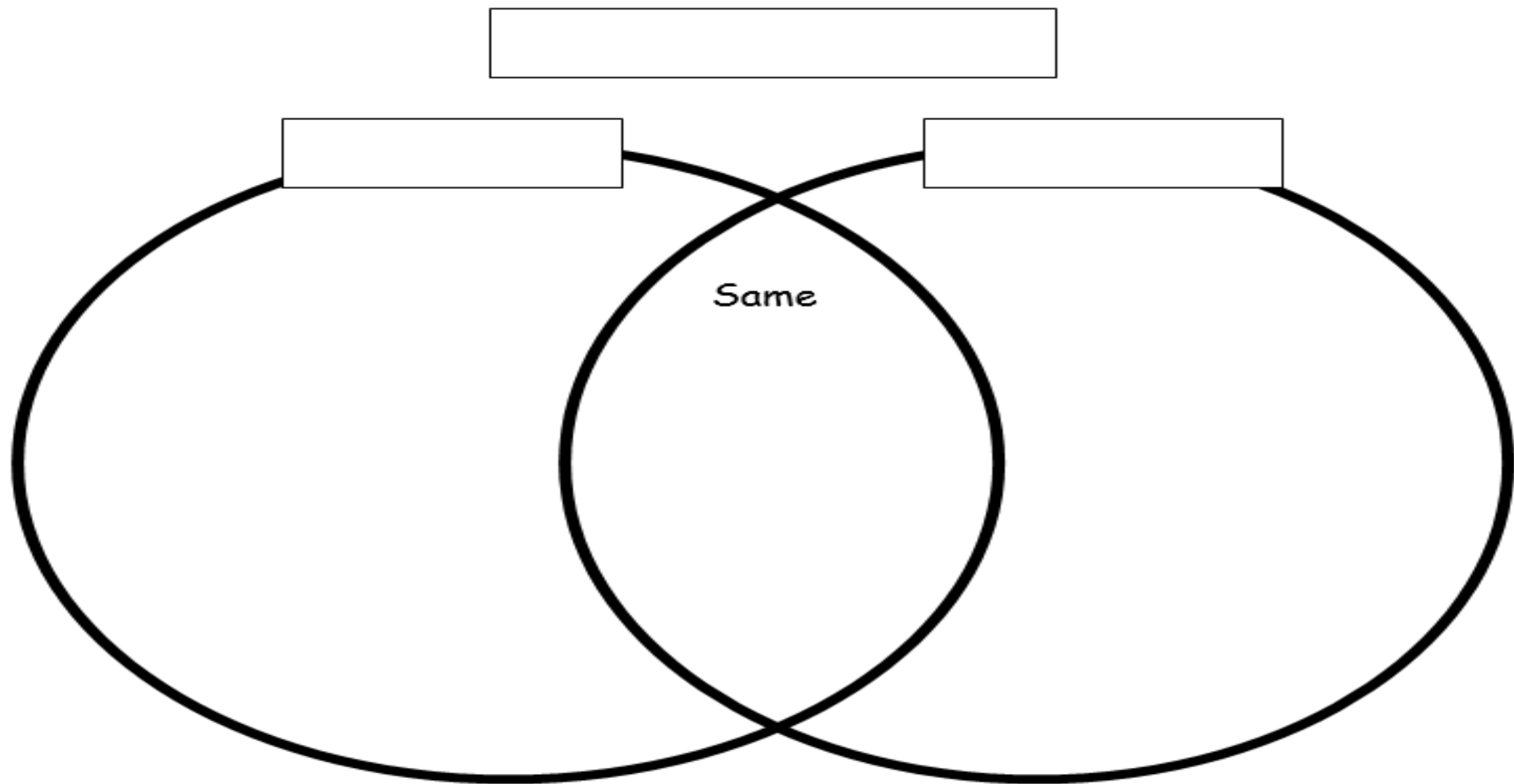


ARTSmart: Red-wing Blackbirds



Compare and Contrast

Use the Venn Diagram that follows to list how these version of Redwing Blackbirds are different and the same.



Ellen Lanyon

Born 1926, Chicago, Illinois

Died 2013, New York, New York

Redwinged Blackbirds, 1997-2007

Lithograph

Gift of the artist, 2009.99

Lanyon's print features a male and female pair of Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). As is typical with birds, the male is far more colorful than the female. The female of the species shows just a hint of color on her wings.





Margaret Evelyn Whittemore

Born 1897, Topeka, Kansas

Died 1983, Sarasota, Florida

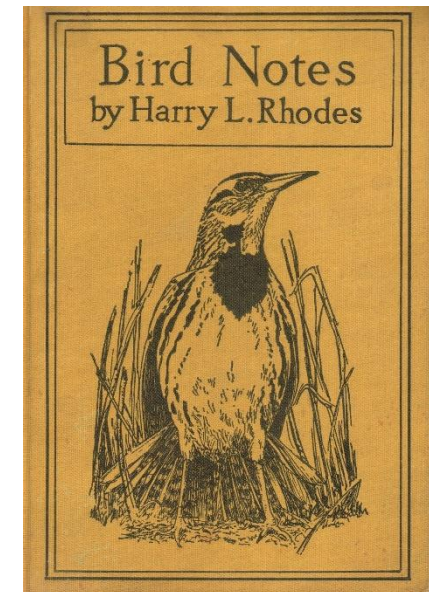
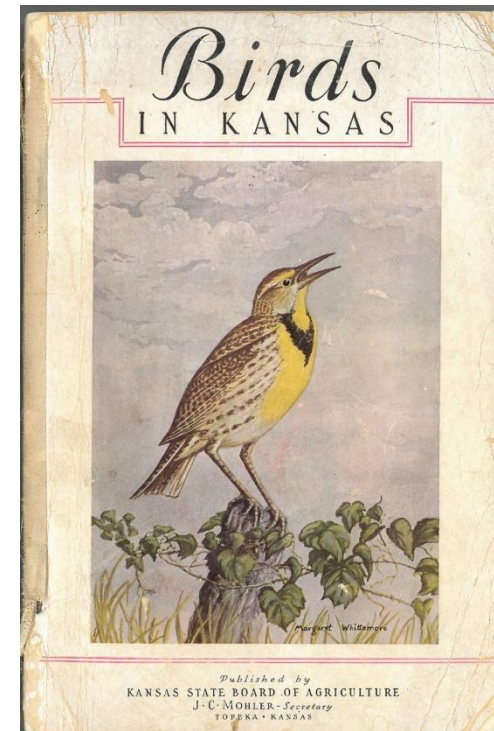
Red-Winged Blackbird, mid-20th century

Screenprint

2015.160

Whittemore created numerous images for the 1932 book *Bird Notes*, by H. L. Rhodes and *Birds in Kansas* and was a contributing artist to *Audubon* magazine. She and fellow Kansas artist Avis Chitwood traveled the state in 1941 to record flowers, trees, and birds.

According to Rhodes' book, the migratory Red-winged Blackbird arrives in Kansas in March.



Red-winged Blackbird facts

Agelaius phoeniceus



The red-winged blackbird lives throughout North America, except in the arid desert, high mountain ranges, and arctic or dense afforestation regions.

It breeds from central-eastern Alaska and Yukon in the northwest, and Newfoundland in the northeast, to northern Costa Rica in the south, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Red-winged blackbirds in the northern parts of the range are migratory, spending winters in the southern United States and Central America. Migration begins in September or October. In western and central America, populations are generally non-migratory.

The red-winged blackbird inhabits open grassy areas. It prefers wetlands, and inhabits both freshwater and saltwater marshes, particularly if cattails are present. (Did you notice the cattail in Whittemore's print?) It is also found in dry upland areas, where it inhabits meadows, prairies, and old fields/ agricultural areas. They eat seeds and insects.



The common name for the red-winged blackbird is taken from male's distinctive red shoulder patches, or epaulets.

The red is caused by two keto-carotenoids (astaxanthin and canthaxanthin) synthesized by the birds themselves. The yellow is caused by two yellow dietary precursor pigments (lutein and zeaxanthin) in the birds' diet.

Research has shown that birds with larger red and yellow wing patches are better at protecting their territory and attracting mates.

Like most bird species, the female (shown on top) is less decorative, with markings that provide camouflage.

Male Red-winged Blackbirds do everything they can to get noticed, sitting on high perches and belting out their conk-la-ree song all day long. Females stay lower, skulking through vegetation for food and quietly weaving together their remarkable nests.



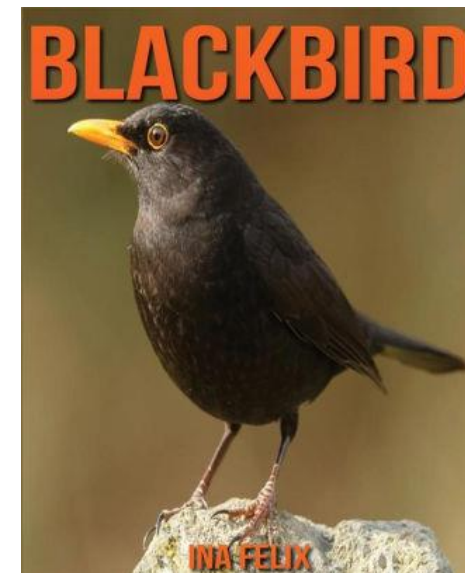
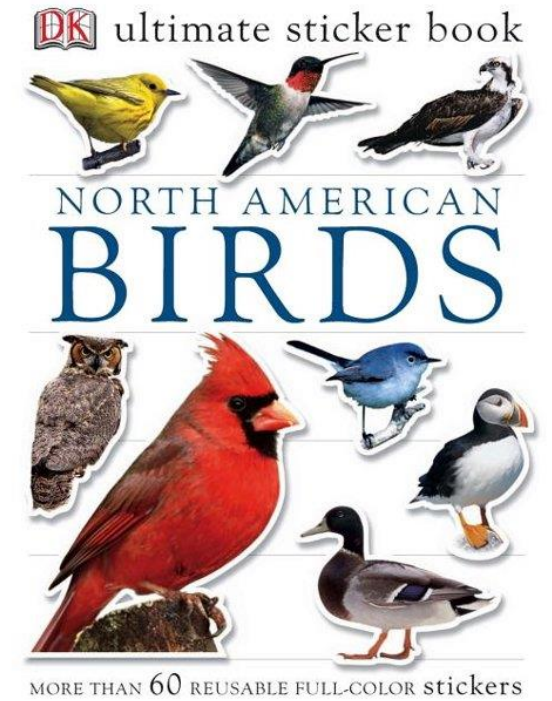
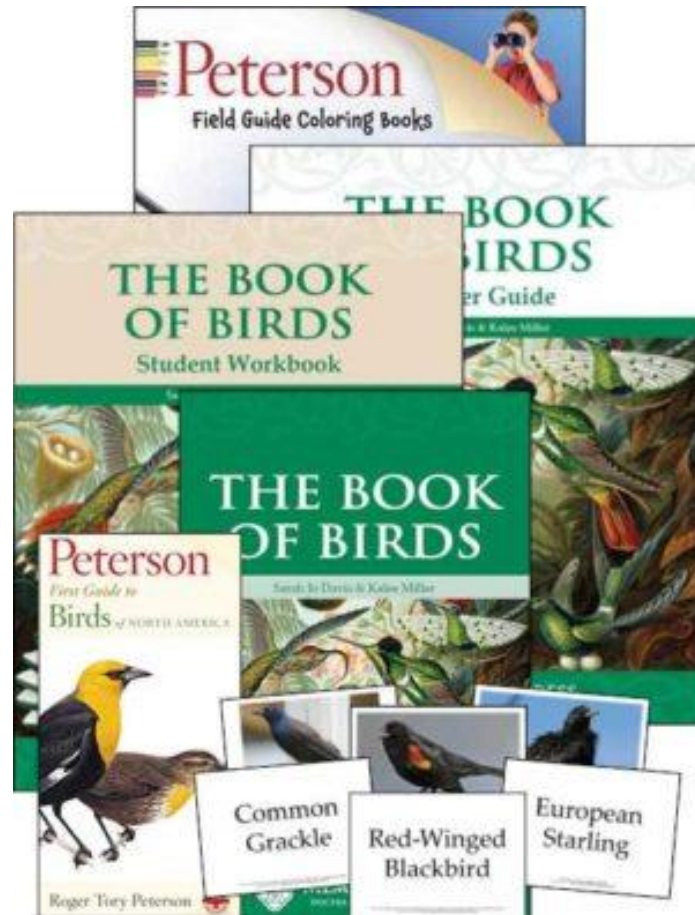
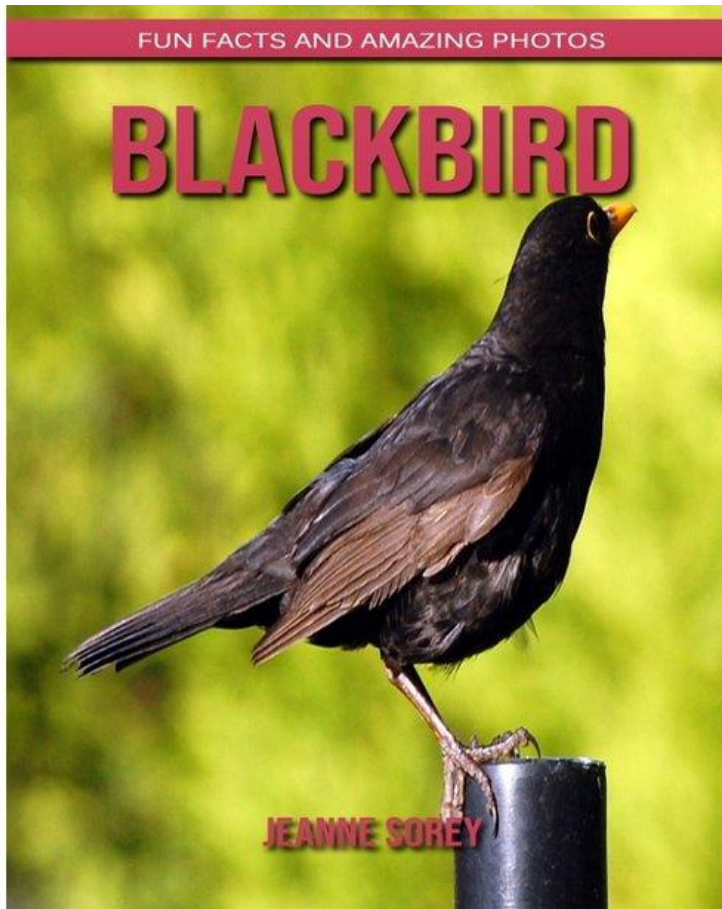


Females Red-Winged Blackbirds create elaborate nests. The males aggressively guard the nests.



Red-winged Blackbird Song and
Territorial Display
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=HO1ZCglzKOK](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HO1ZCglzKOK)

Learn more about song birds



Additional Red-winged Blackbirds



Which version do you like better?

Ellen Lanyon
Born 1926, Chicago, Illinois
Died 2013, New York, New York
Redwinged Blackbirds, 1997-2007
Lithograph
Gift of the artist, 2009.98 & 99





Whittemore's *Red-Winged Blackbird* was also printed in other colors.



Red-winged Blackbird

Blackbird Family

The Red-winged Blackbird is a welcome arrival about the meadows in March. His liquid call-note, "kong-quer-reee," like the "piping of the frogs in the spring," proclaims the presence of a marshy place; for it is in such a place that he loves to build his nest among the cattails and rushes.

From early morning till late evening he announces his presence by his peculiar song, accompanied by a bowing of the head, a spreading of the wings and a fluffing-out of his scarlet epaulets.

One Sunday in October, as we were driving along the old Santa Fe trail near Council Grove, Kansas, an enormous flock of Blackbirds appeared overhead. The sound of their flying was like that of a rushing wind. Stopping the car and watching them settle on the upland and in a cornfield, we identified them as Red-wings, with some Cowbirds and Starlings in the flock. They were all quite noisy while perched on the corn stalks, but when they flew away, there was scarcely a sound except the roar of their wings. They flew suddenly, turning to the right and to the left at the same instant, as if driven by a common impulse.

The Red-wing is about the size of a Robin, or a trifle smaller. He nests from Florida to Canada and winters south of Virginia. He is distinctly a beneficial bird because of his destruction of weevils, click beetles, grasshoppers, ants, bugs, flies, the caterpillar of the gipsy moth, the forest tent caterpillar, and other hairy larvae. In the South he joins the Bobolink in raiding the rice fields, but the good he does far outweighs the damage and for this reason the law protects him. He eats the rice scattered on the ground, thus benefiting the sower by destroying the "volunteer," or "red" rice, which, if allowed to grow, reduces the value of the crop.



Bird Notes, 1932

H.L. Rhodes,
illustrated by
Margaret
Whittemore



Redwings

130/150

M.R. Bebb '57

Red-winged Blackbirds

Alternate Title: *Redwings* (title changed 1967)

March 6, 1957

Medium: 4-plate color aquatint and softground etching

Image Size: 7¼ x 9¼ in.

Inscriptions: LL, graphite: Redwings; LC, graphite: 130/150; LR, graphite: M. R. Bebb '57

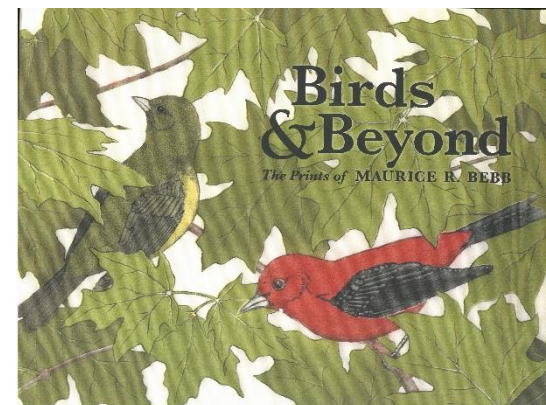
Printing History: 1–12 March 1957 (seven satin); 13–19 September 1957 (satin); 20–29 March 1958 (satin); 30–41 April 1964 (satin); 42–62 March 1967 (satin); 63–72 August 1967 (eight paper); 73–95 August 1969; 96–112 May 1976; 113–131 August 1978; 91–114 September 1970; Artist's Proof 1–3 August 1981

Exhibitions: Prairie Print Makers, October 1957; Print Makers Society of California, October 1957

Collections: MC, MIA, OSAC

The Red-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus*, breeds in marshes across the United States, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The males will aggressively defend their territory, and will even dive-bomb people who get too close to their nests. In winter they congregate in enormous flocks, often with other species, to feed on grain in fields.

The Museum has a collection of prints by Bebb, although not this one of the Red-winged Blackbirds. From *Birds and Beyond, Prints of Maurice Bebb*.





If you look carefully, you can see the red patches on the birds' wings.

Robert Newton Sudlow

Blackbirds, 1960

Oil on canvas

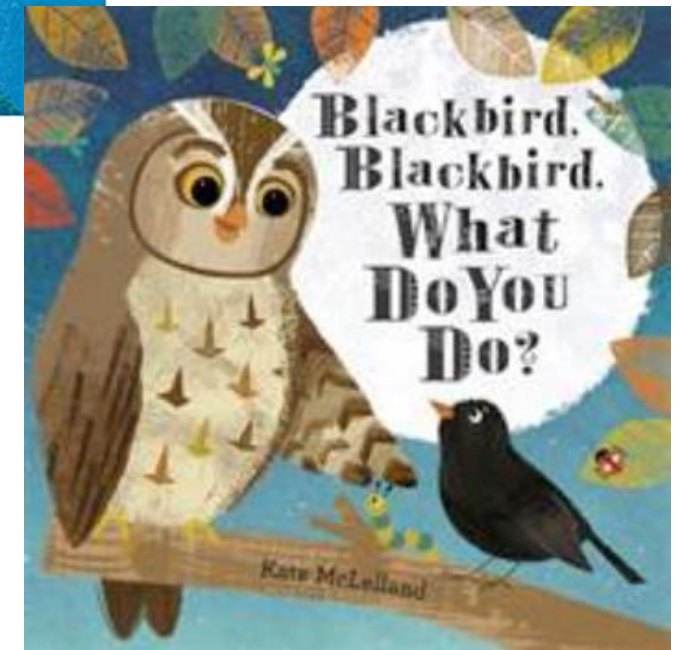
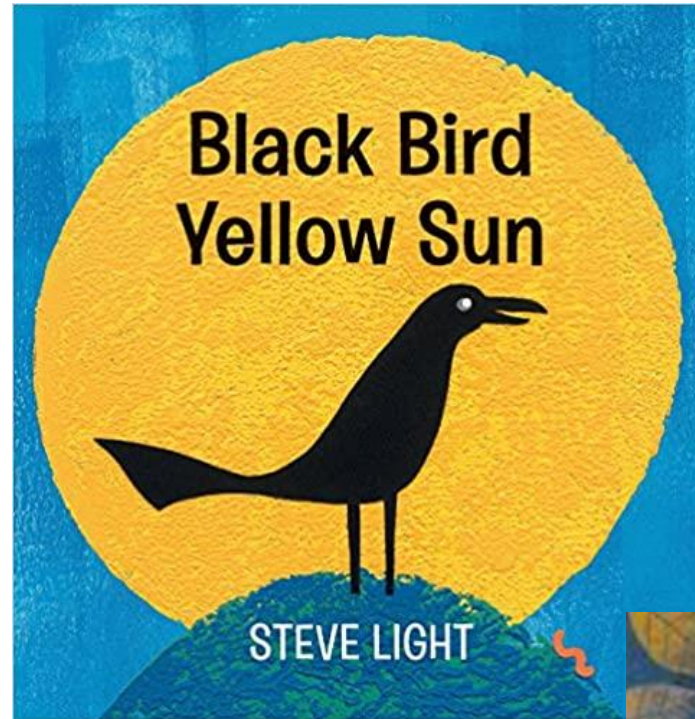
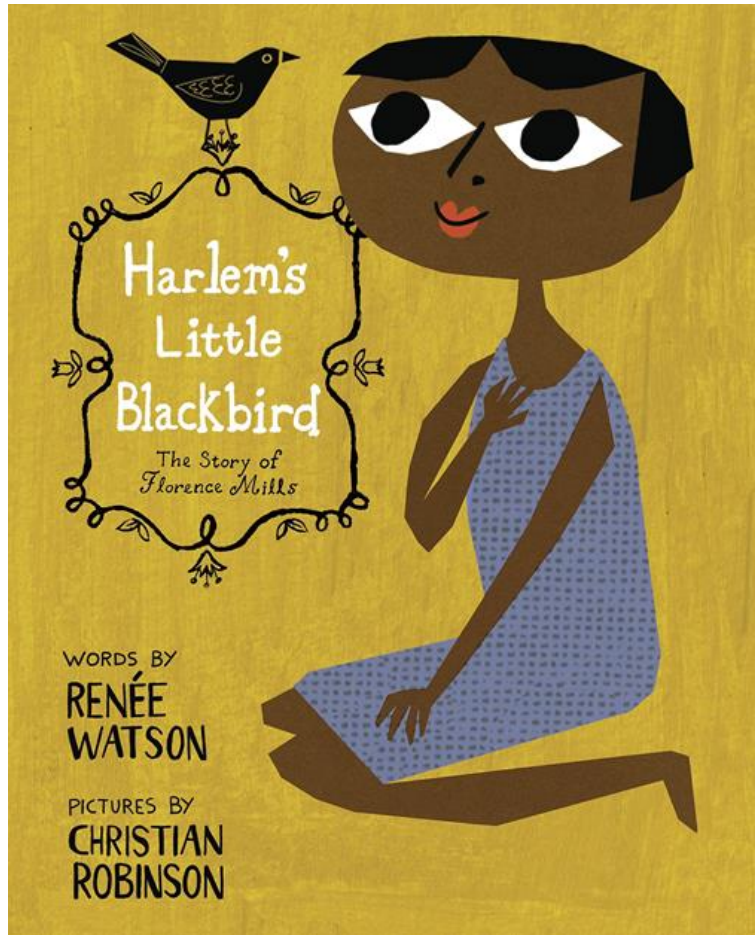
KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach

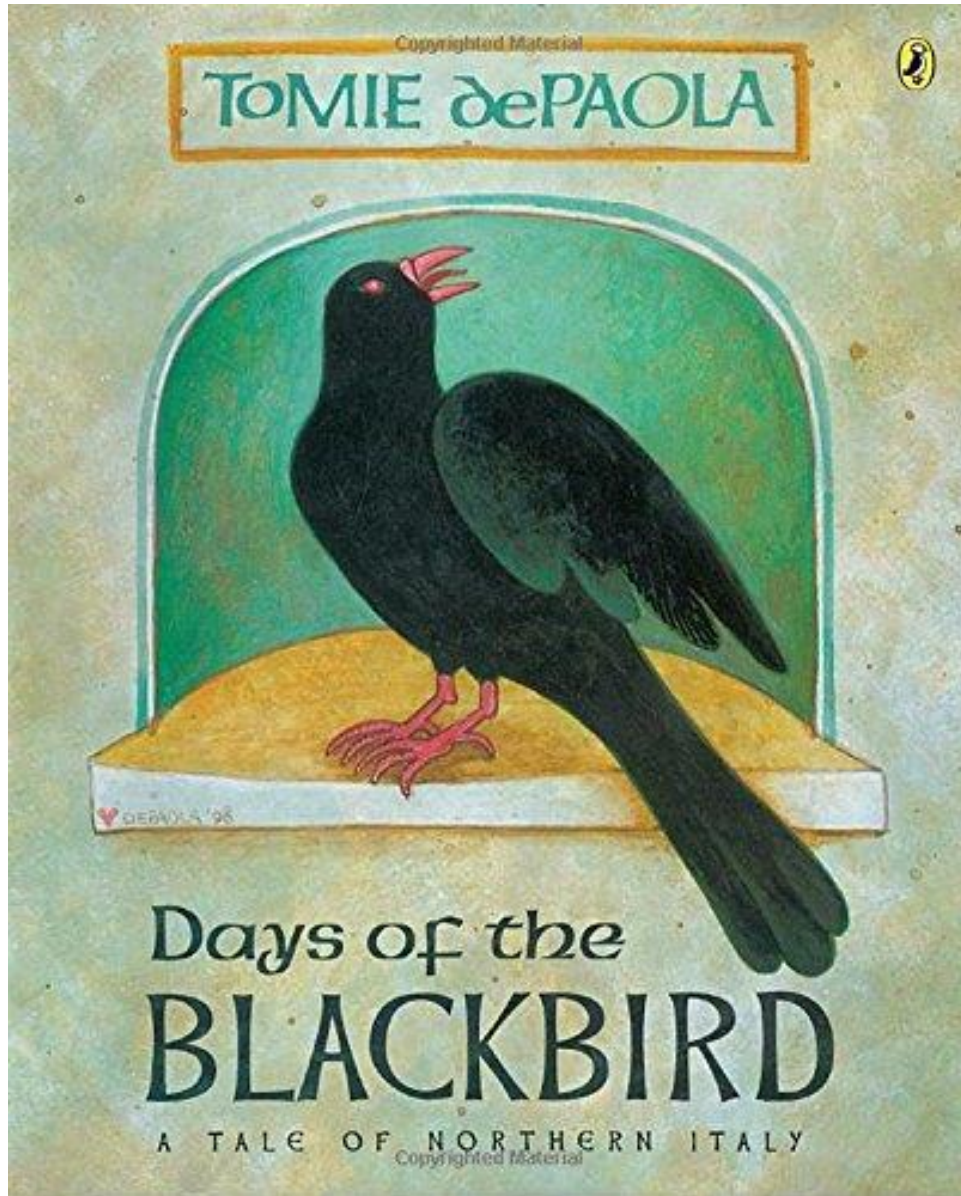
Museum of Art, gift of Dakin

Cramer in memory of Nancylee

Foster, 1996.8

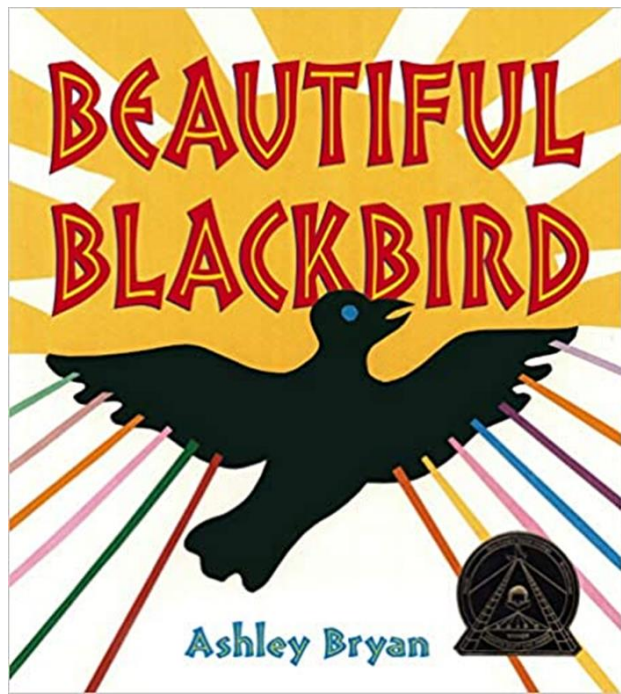
Picture Books





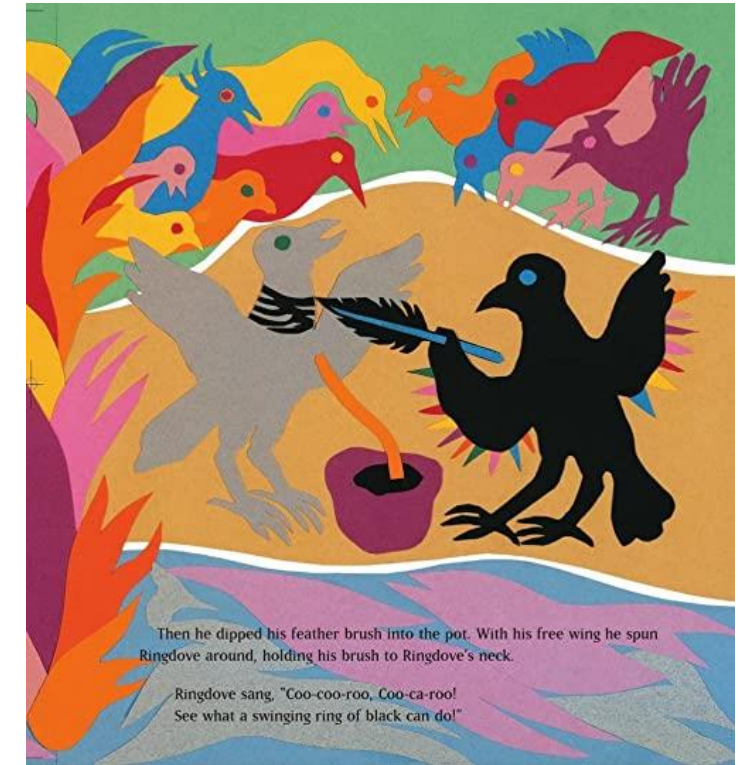
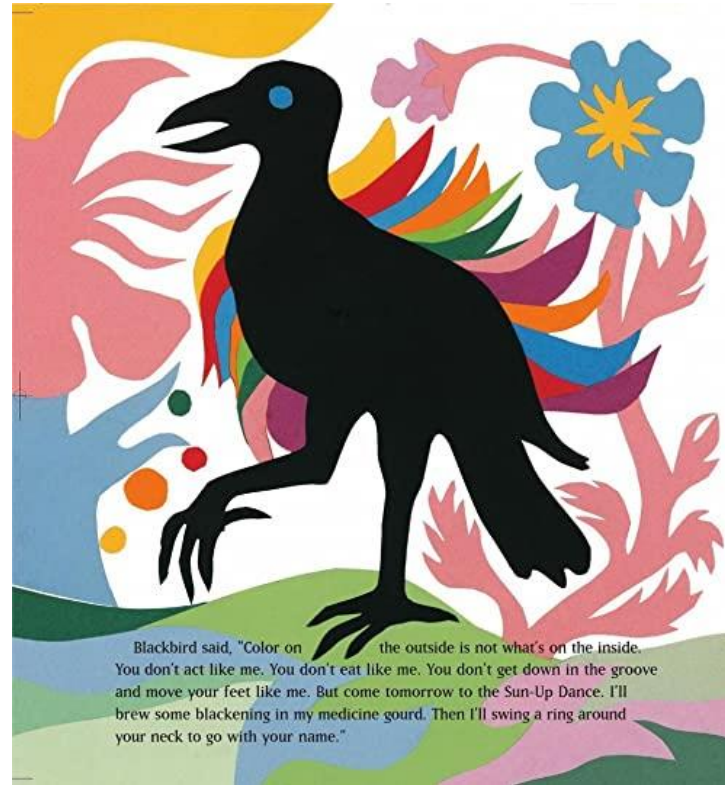
Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXZRvfGk8GM>



Video by Ashley Bryan

<https://www.pbs.org/video/georgia-read-more-beautiful-blackbird/>



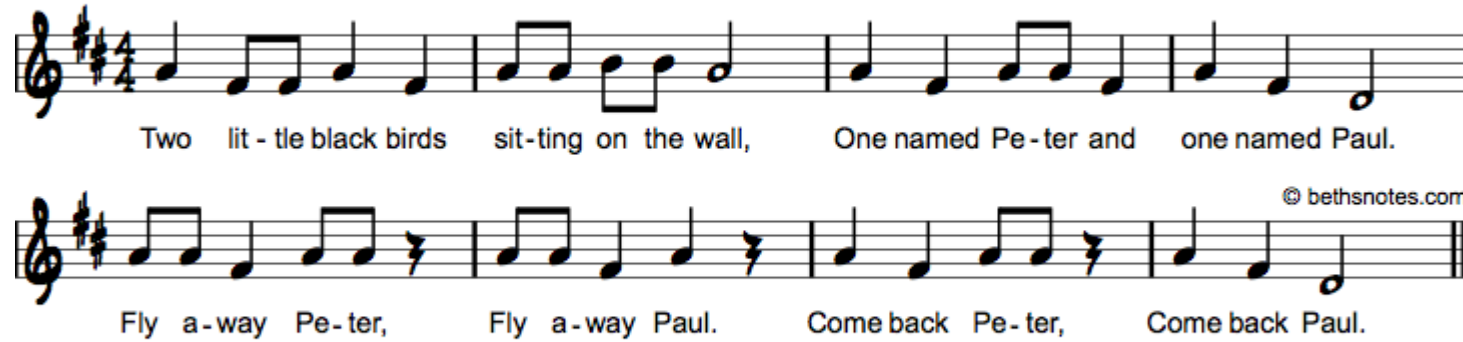
A tale from the Ila-speaking people of Zambia gets new life in this picture book adaptation from Coretta Scott King Award winner Ashley Bryan about appreciating one's heritage and discovering the beauty within.

Long ago, Blackbird was voted the most beautiful bird in the forest. The other birds, who were colored red, yellow, blue, and green, were so envious that they begged Blackbird to paint their feathers with a touch of black so they could be beautiful too. Although Blackbird warns them that true beauty comes from within, the other birds persist and soon each is given a ring of black around their neck or a dot of black on their wings—markings that detail birds to this very day.

Two Little Black Birds

Beth Thompson

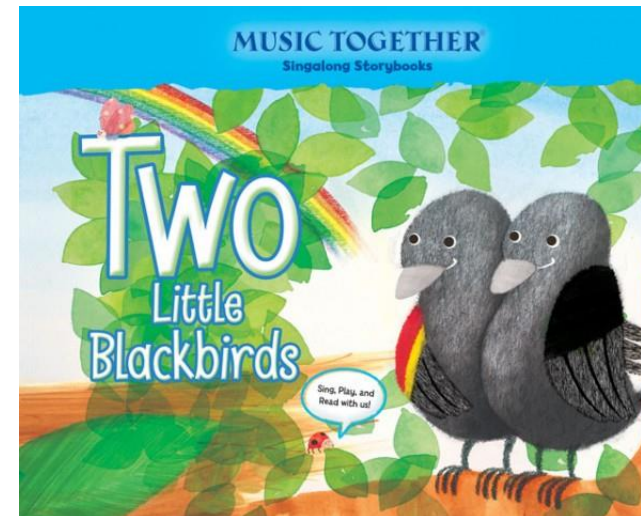
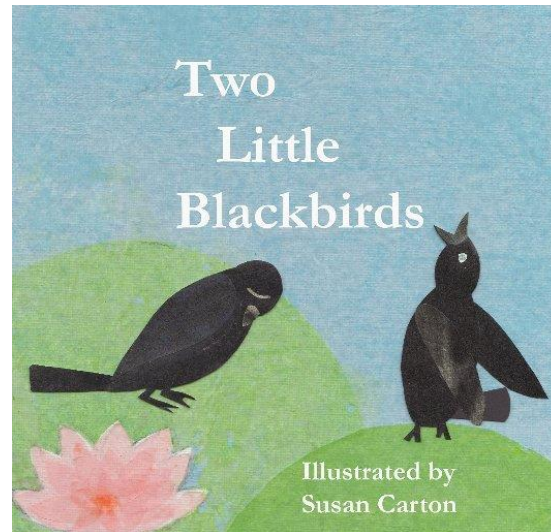
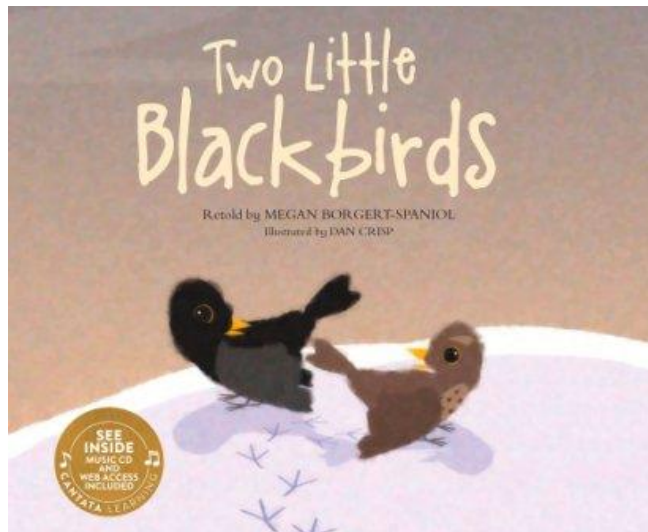
Folk song



Two little blackbirds sitting on a hill.
One named Jack and the other named Jill.
Fly away Jack. Fly away Jill.
Come back Jack, Come back Jill.

The rhyme was first recorded when published in Mother Goose's Melody in London around 1765.

“There were two blackbirds
Sat upon a hill,
The one was nam'd Jack,
The other nam'd Gill;
Fly away Jack,
Fly away Gill,
Come again Jack,
Come again Gill.”



The names seem to have been replaced with the apostles Peter and Paul in the 19th century.

Art Projects

Red-winged Blackbird

Agelaius phoeniceus

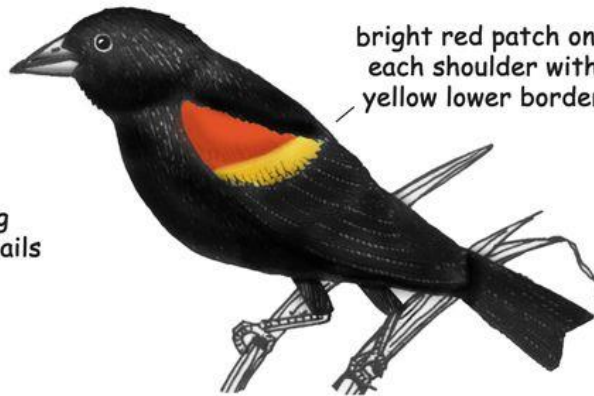
Females are mottled
brown-ish black
to blend in

black body

bright red patch on
each shoulder with
yellow lower border

loud call to defend
territory of nesting
females in the cattails

long tail



www.exploringnature.org

©Sheri Amsel

How to Draw a Red-winged blackbird in 7 Easy Steps



Step 1: First, draw the head.



Step 2: Draw the face of
Red-winged blackbird.



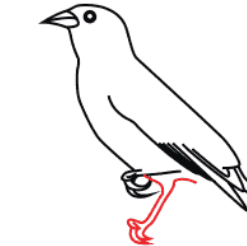
Step 3: Draw the body.



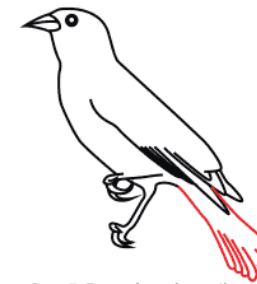
Step 4: Draw the wings.



Step 5: Draw the leg .



Step 6: Then, draw the other leg.



Step 7: Draw the other tail.



Your Red-winged blackbird is now done!

WeDrawAnimals.Com

Beautiful Blackbird

You can find the lesson plan and templates here

[http://images.pcmac.org/SiSFiles/Schools/GA/SumterCounty/FurlowCharter/Uploads/Presentations/Beautiful Blackbird Paper Art %7BSIS0871B24E46C3%7D.pdf](http://images.pcmac.org/SiSFiles/Schools/GA/SumterCounty/FurlowCharter/Uploads/Presentations/Beautiful%20Blackbird%20Paper%20Art%20%7BSIS0871B24E46C3%7D.pdf)

Supplies

- 12" x 18" white paper
- 9" x 12" black paper for bird
- 9" x 12" yellow paper for sun
- Thin strips of colored paper
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Pencil

Trace a semi circle and cut rays from yellow paper.

The book has a template for the bird.

Add the colored strips.

If you want to make your bird red-winged, add patches of yellow with red on top!



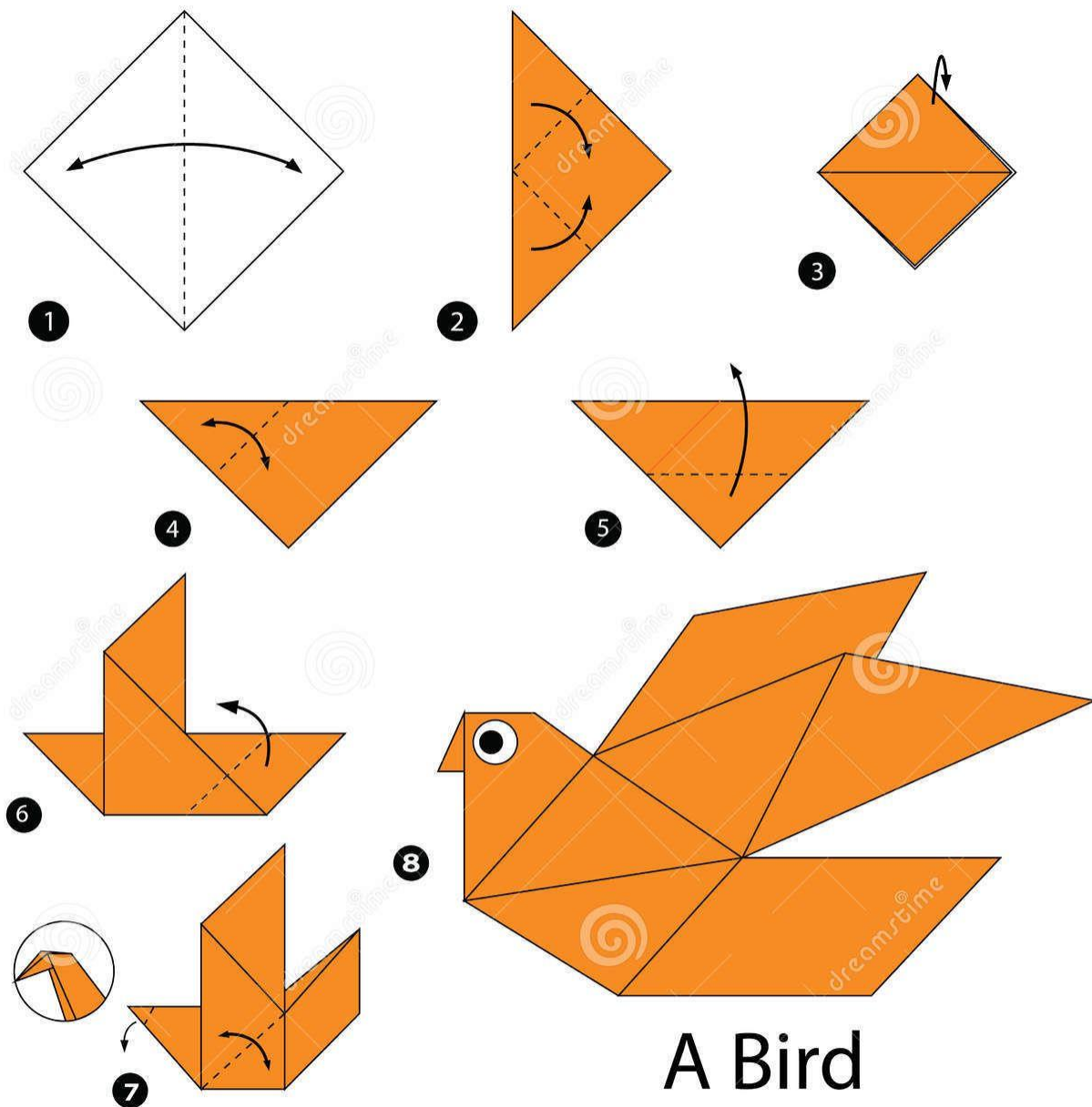
Add the signature red and yellow patch to turn these into Red-winged Blackbirds



Origami

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpwezRCO0d8>

Red-winged Blackbird, Opus 668, 2015 by Robert Lang – very difficult!



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