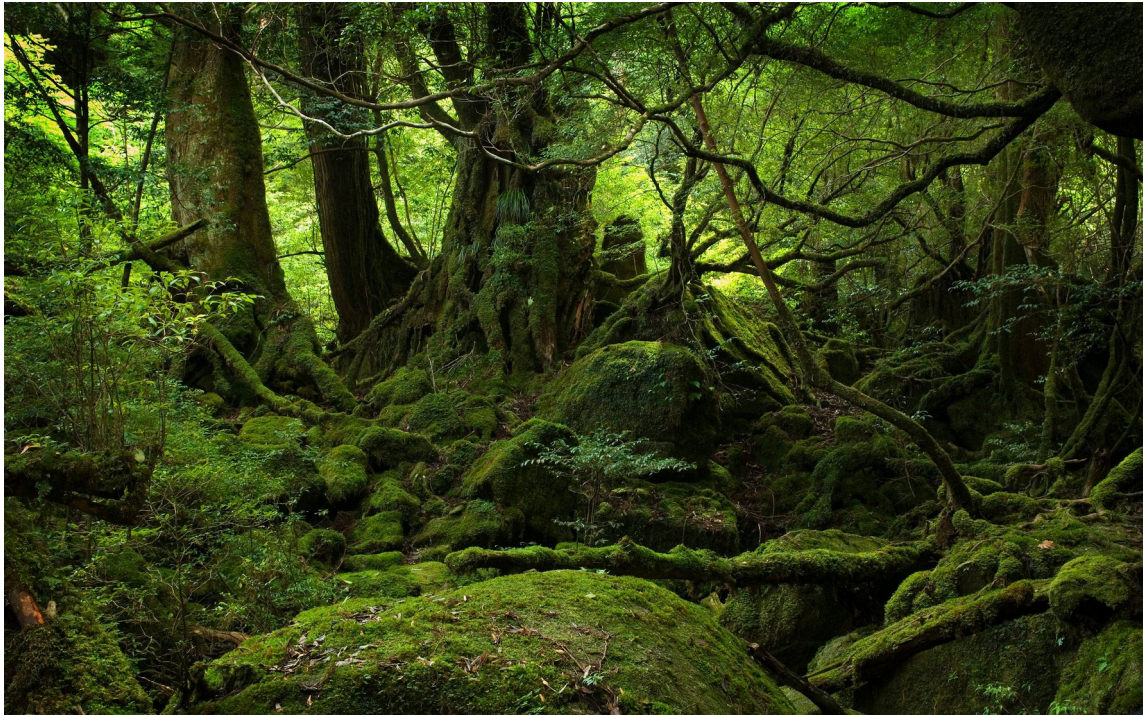


Habitat



The very first thing to notice when identifying a bird is WHERE you see it. Every bird species has a preferred habitat, sometimes a very specific preferred habitat, and groups of related bird species tend to prefer similar habitats. So by being aware of which birds like what kinds of places, you can very quickly narrow down your possibilities.

And I don't mean just "woods" or "fields". Think about WHERE in those places. In the woods, some bird species spend almost all their time on or near the ground, others above the ground in brushy undergrowth, and others way high in the canopy. Most woodland species have a strong preference for one of these.

Also, what kinds of plants are growing there? Deciduous and coniferous forests tend to have very different birds in them.

The world is not divided into just "woods" and "fields". How about mowed agricultural fields? Brushy overgrown fields? Stream banks? Ponds? Short, brushy woods like an alder or willow thicket? A tall open woodland like a bigleaf maple forest?

Pay attention to these things, and become familiar with the general types of birds that tend to prefer them. Sparrows tend to prefer brushy areas. Chickadees and nuthatches like woods with undergrowth. Marshes and wet areas attract some specific kinds of sparrows and small songbirds such as Yellowthroats. Swallows like to fly over places with lots of insects, like tall grass fields and open bodies of water.