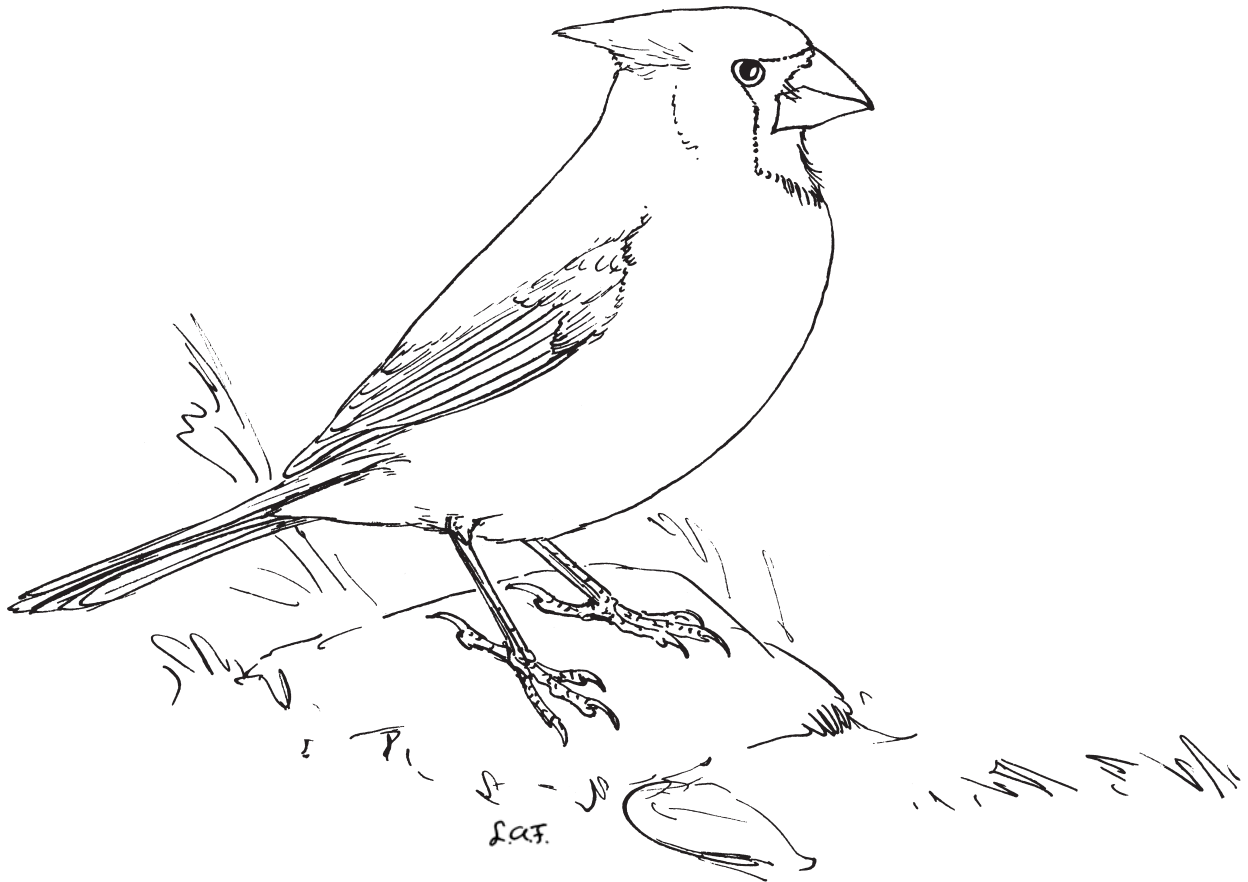


## Northern Cardinal



The brilliantly colored male Northern Cardinal, (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) fiercely defends its breeding territory from other males. When a male sees its reflection in glass surfaces, it frequently will spend hours fighting the imaginary intruder. Cardinals are a cheerful addition to the Treman Bird Feeding Garden in the winter.

### Identification Tips

- Medium songbird (8–9 inches from bill to tail) with large crest and heavy, orange-red seed-crushing red bill.
- Deep black face mask around eyes and base of bill.
- Male entirely brilliant red with a grayish tinge on wings and tail. Prominent large face mask
- Female grayish-tan with a red wash on tail, crest, and wings. Face mask is smaller than in the male.
- Song a series of clear, pure-toned whistles, the first down-slurred and ending in a slow trill. *Cheer, cheer, cheer, what, what, what, what.* Call a sharp *chip*.

### Cool Facts

- Most female songbirds do not sing but female cardinal do, often from the nest. The song may give the male information about when to bring food to the nest. A mated pair shares song phrases, but the female may sing a longer and slightly more complex song than the male.
- The cardinal's red color comes from eating carotenoid pigments in its food during molt and may signal mate vigor. Brighter red males hold the best territories, get more to eat, and have greater reproductive success than duller males.
- Generations of neighbors share their song repertoires with very little improvising and copying errors.