

4-H'er Setup for Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab

Step 1: Install Merlin

On the phone or tablet:

1. Open the App Store (iPhone) or Google Play Store (Android).
 2. Search for **Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab**.
 3. Install the free app. Merlin works on current Apple and Android devices.
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Step 2: Open Merlin for the First Time

When Merlin starts, it may ask for:

Location Permission

Choose:

"Allow While Using the App"

This is important because Merlin uses your location to determine which birds are likely to occur nearby. It greatly improves identification accuracy.

Microphone Permission

Choose:

"Allow"

Without microphone access, the Sound ID feature cannot listen to bird songs and calls.

Step 3: Set Up the Geographic Area (Very Important)

This is the part many users overlook.

Merlin uses regional "Bird Packs" (sometimes called "Offline Birds") that contain information, photos, maps, and sounds for birds in a particular area.

Example for a Person in Western Pennsylvania

When Merlin detects the phone's location in Pennsylvania, it will usually recommend a bird pack such as:

US: Northeast or **US & Canada**

Merlin normally marks the best pack as **Recommended**.

(See next page.)

To install:

Tap **Settings** (gear icon). Tap **My Offline Birds** or **Bird Packs**.
Select the recommended region.

Tap **Download**. Wait for the download to finish (Wi-Fi is best).

For people in Indiana County, PA, downloading the Northeast pack would include the local birds.

Step 4: Create an Account (Optional but Recommended)

Merlin will ask for an email address.

A 4-H person can: Use their own email (if old enough), or Have a parent create an account.

Creating an account allows: Saving identified birds Building a Life List Syncing across devices

Step 5: Try Sound ID

This is usually the feature 4-H'ers will enjoy the most.

Open Merlin. Tap **Sound ID**. Tap the microphone button.

Hold the phone still for 15–30 seconds – or several minutes.

Tip: Since the microphone is on the phone's bottom, hold the phone upside down tilted toward the birds.

Merlin will begin displaying birds it hears in real time.

Step 6: Good Birding Habits

Don't Assume Merlin Is Always Right. Merlin is remarkably good, but it can make mistakes.

A good habit is: Let Merlin suggest a bird. Tap the bird's name. Listen to the sample recording. Compare it to what you actually heard.

This turns the app from a "bird detector" into a learning tool.

Step 7: Explore Birds Near You

Another fun feature for a 4-H'er:

Tap **Explore Birds**. Allow location access.

Merlin will show birds likely to occur nearby based on location and season.