

Westcave's Most Common Birds Field Guide (Spring and Summer)

Please enjoy this guide to the most common birds you may see during your visit. Westcave Preserve has over 170 different avian species, including the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler.



Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*)

Photos by Tom Hausler

On the following pages is an abbreviated guide to 22 different birds that can be found at the Preserve. Each page will have a photo, description, range map, general ecology, and cool facts about that particular bird.

Don't forget to use your field guide apps (like Merlin Bird ID, eBird, iNaturalist, or Seek) to log your findings or help determine a bird sighting.

White-Winged Dove

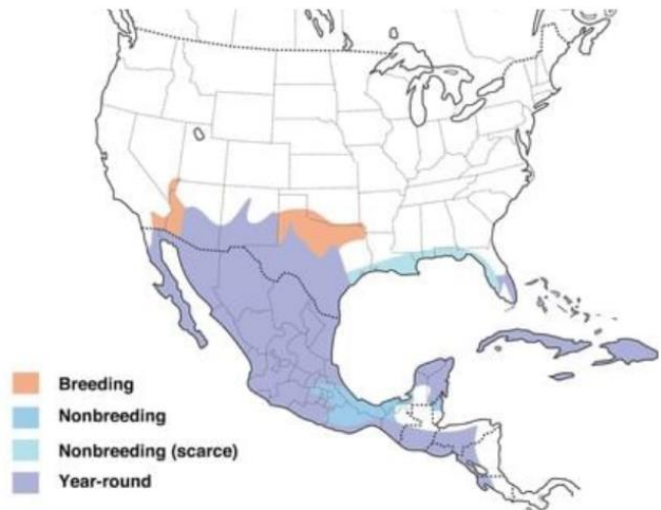
ADULT DESCRIPTION

- A white stripe at the edge of the folded wing.
- White-winged Doves forage on waste grain and seeds on the ground, or take to trees to eat berries.
- They often visit backyards, especially those with birdbaths and feeders.



BASIC DESCRIPTION

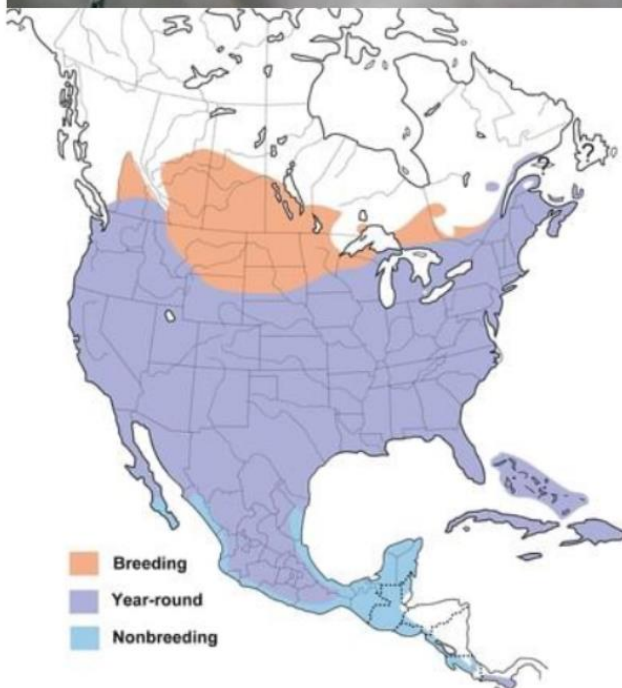
Originally a bird of desert thickets, the White-winged Dove has become a common sight in cities and towns across the southern U.S. When perched, this bird's unspotted brown upperparts and neat white crescents along the wing distinguish it from the ubiquitous Mourning Dove. In flight, those subdued crescents become flashing white stripes worthy of the bird's common name. Take a closer look and you'll see a remarkably colorful face, with bright-orange eyes and blue "eye shadow."



COOL FACTS

- In the early 1980s, the singer Stevie Nicks introduced millions of Americans to the White-winged Dove with her song "Edge of Seventeen"
- The oldest White-winged Dove on record was at least 21 years and 9 months old. It was banded in Arizona and later recovered in Mexico

Mourning Dove



ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Brown to buffy-tan overall
- Black spots on the wings
- Black-bordered white tips to the tail feathers
- Long, thin, fan-shaped tail
- Thin, black bill
- Pinkish legs
- Puffing chest when the dove is singing



Mourning Dove

Zenaida macroura

ORDER: Columbiformes

FAMILY: Columbidae

Doves



Habitat
Open
Woodlands



Food
Seeds



Nesting
Tree



Behavior
Ground
Forager



Conservation
Low
Concern

BASIC DESCRIPTION

A graceful, slender-tailed, small-headed dove that's common across the continent. Mourning Doves perch on telephone wires and forage for seeds on the ground; their flight is fast and bullet straight. Their soft, drawn-out calls sound like laments. When taking off, their wings make a sharp whistling or whinnying. Mourning Doves are the most frequently hunted species in North America.

COOL FACTS

- Mourning Doves feed on the ground, swallowing seeds and storing them in an enlargement of the esophagus called the crop and then fly to a safe perch to digest the meal (the record is 17,200 bluegrass seeds in a single crop!)
- They eat roughly 12 to 20 percent of their body weight per day
- They are the most widespread and abundant game bird in North America
- The oldest known Mourning Dove was at least 30 years and 4 months old and was a male
- These Doves fly in a tight formation as a form of social display

Painted Bunting

Male



Female



 Painted Bunting
Passerina ciris
ORDER: Passeriformes
FAMILY: Cardinalidae

Buntings

				
Habitat Scrub	Food Seeds	Nesting Shrub	Behavior Ground Forager	Conservation Low Concern

BASIC DESCRIPTION

With their vivid fusion of blue, green, yellow, and red, male Painted Buntings seem to have flown straight out of a child's coloring book. Females and immatures are a distinctive bright green with a pale eyering. These fairly common finches breed in the coastal Southeast and in the south-central U.S., where they often come to feeders. They are often caught and sold illegally as cage birds, particularly in Mexico and the Caribbean, a practice that puts pressure on their breeding populations.



COOL FACTS

- The western population of the Painted Buntings migrate in the fall and then molt in areas in northern Mexico
- The eastern population of Painted Buntings molt on its breeding grounds before migration
- They are illegally trapped and sold in Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and to a lesser extent in Florida
- The oldest recorded wild Painted Bunting was at least 12 years old

ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Medium-sized finches with stubby, thick, seed-eating bills
- Males have blue heads, red underparts, and green backs
- Females and immatures are uniform, bright yellow-green with pale eyering

White-eyed Vireo



BASIC DESCRIPTION

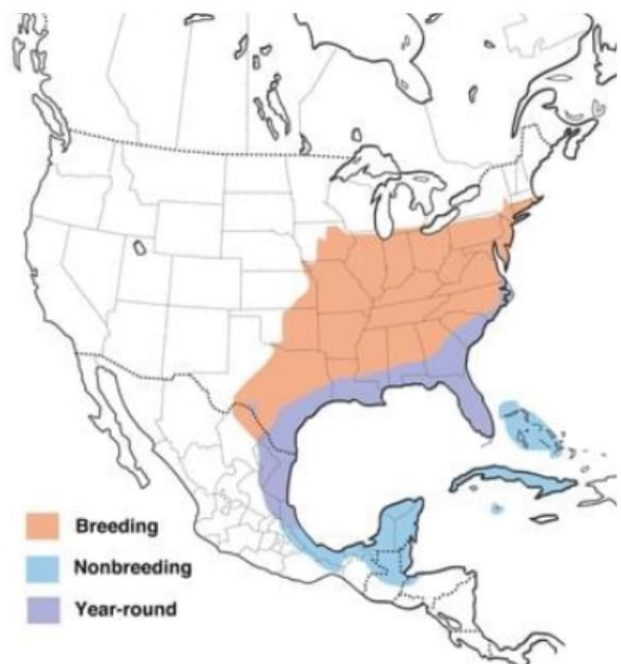
Thickets and scrubby areas seem to vibrate with the spunky song of the White-eyed Vireo every summer in the southeastern United States. From the depths of a thicket, a yellow-spectacled bird peers through, its white eye gleaming and its yellow sides shining. It forages in the understory often out of sight, but sings nearly all day to let you know it's there. It spends the winter along the coast in the United States and farther south in Mexico, the Caribbean, and northern Central America.

ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Thick, straight, slightly hooked bill
- Grey head
- Olive colored back
- Yellow around the eyes
- Dark wings with two white wing-bars
- Juveniles have dark eyes that turn pale in their first winter or spring

COOL FACTS

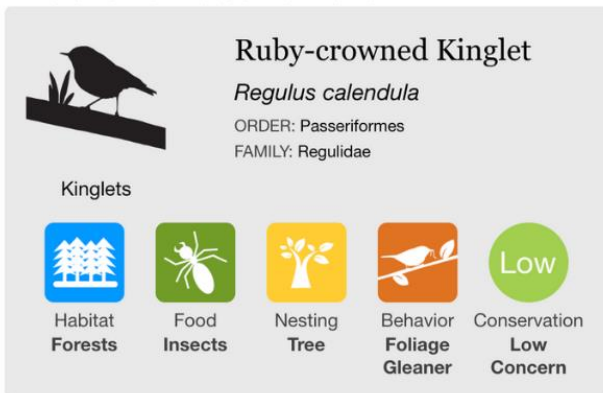
- The White-eyed Vireo likes to sing songs
- Both male and females sing on wintering grounds, but only males sing on the breeding grounds
- Scientists found a 400,000 year old wing of a Vireo in Florida
- These birds get clean by rubbing their bodies on dewy foliage in the morning
- The oldest recorded Vireo was 10 year and 11 months old and was a male



Ruby-crowned Kinglet

COOL FACTS

- They are small birds that lay a lot of eggs
- There can be as many as 12 eggs in a single nest
- These birds use only about 10 calories a day!
- The oldest known Ruby-crowned Kinglet was 4 years and 7 months old and was a female



BASIC DESCRIPTION

A tiny bird seemingly overflowing with energy, the Ruby-crowned Kinglet forages almost frantically through lower branches of shrubs and trees. Its habit of constantly flicking its wings is a key identification clue. Smaller than a warbler or chickadee, this plain green-gray bird has a white eyering and a white bar on the wing. Alas, the male's brilliant ruby crown patch usually stays hidden—your best chance to see it is to find an excited male singing in spring or summer.

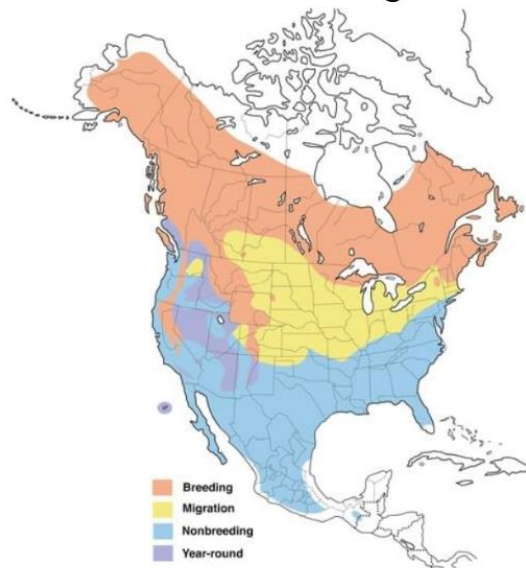


Male



ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Tiny songbirds with relatively large heads
- They are olive green with white eyering
- White and black striped wingbars
- The males have the ruby crown which is occasionally apparent
- They have some yellowing on their bodies and wings



Lesser Goldfinch

Male



Female



COOL FACTS

- In the eastern part of the U.S. and south of central Mexico the Lesser Goldfinch have black backs
- Along the West Coast they have green bodies and black caps
- The Lesser Goldfinch is most common in California and Texas but can be found elsewhere in the U.S.
- The oldest known Lesser Goldfinch was 7 years old



ADULT DESCRIPTION

- The males have a yellow underbelly with a black cap and body with white patches on the wings
- The females have olive colored backs and light yellow underbellies
- The females wings are black with white wingbars and a white rectangle on the edge of the wings
- Both the male and female have short, conical beaks



Lesser Goldfinch
Spinus psaltria
ORDER: Passeriformes
FAMILY: Fringillidae

Finches



Habitat
Open
Woodlands



Food
Seeds



Nesting
Tree



Behavior
Foliage
Gleaner



Low
Conservation
Low
Concern

BASIC DESCRIPTION

Jabbering clouds of yellow, green, and black Lesser Goldfinches gather in scrubby oak, cottonwood, and willow habitats of the western U.S., or visit suburban yards for seeds and water. These finches primarily eat seeds of plants in the sunflower family, and they occur all the way south to the Peruvian Andes. Listen closely to their wheezy songs, which often include snippets from the songs of other birds.

Black-crested Titmouse



BASIC DESCRIPTION

A bird of Texas and northeastern Mexico, the Black-crested Titmouse is common in oak woods and towns. It was once considered a subspecies of the Tufted Titmouse, and the two species are very similar in appearance, voice, and habits.

COOL FACTS

- The Black-crested Titmouse hybridizes with the Tufted Titmouse where their ranges overlap in central Texas
- They were considered the same species for a while, but they are distinct genetically and vocally
- The oldest known Black-crested Titmouse was 5 years and 1 month old



ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Small gray songbird.
- Short tuft on head.
- Front of crest black.
- Juvenile lacks black crest and has less buff on sides.

Northern Cardinal

Male



Female



BASIC DESCRIPTION

The male Northern Cardinal is perhaps responsible for getting more people to open up a field guide than any other bird. They're a perfect combination of familiarity, conspicuousness, and style: a shade of red you can't take your eyes off. Even the brown females sport a sharp crest and warm red accents. Cardinals don't migrate and they don't molt into a dull plumage, so they're still breathtaking in winter's snowy backyards. In summer, their sweet whistles are one of the first sounds of the morning.

ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Male cardinals are brilliant red all over, with a reddish bill and black face immediately around the bill.
- Females are pale brown overall with warm reddish tinges in the wings, tail, and crest.



COOL FACTS

- The Northern Cardinal is the state bird of seven states
- Only a few female songbirds sing and the female Cardinal is one of them

Carolina Chickadee



BASIC DESCRIPTION

John James Audubon named this bird while he was in South Carolina. The curious, intelligent Carolina Chickadee looks very much like a Black-capped Chickadee, with a black cap, black bib, gray wings and back, and whitish underside. Carolina and Black-capped chickadees hybridize in the area where their ranges overlap, but the two species probably diverged more than 2.5 million years ago.

COOL FACTS

- In winter, Carolina Chickadees live in flocks of two to eight birds and defend areas against other flocks
- Where the two species ranges come in contact, the Carolina and Black-capped chickadees occasionally hybridize.
- Hybrids can sing the songs of either species.



ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Have a black cap and bib separated by stark white cheeks
- The back, wings, and tail are soft gray
- Short head and large neck giving the bird a spherical shape

House Finch



ADULT DESCRIPTION

- House Finches are small-bodied finches with fairly large beaks and somewhat long, flat heads
- Their beaks are curved and very thick
- The wings are short, making the tail seem long by comparison
- Adult males are rosy red around the face and upper breast, with streaky brown back, belly and tail
- Adult females aren't red; they are plain grayish-brown with thick, blurry streaks and an indistinctly marked face



BASIC DESCRIPTION

The House Finch is a recent introduction from western into eastern North America (and Hawaii), but it has received a warmer reception than other arrivals like the European Starling and House Sparrow. That's partly due to the cheerful red head and breast of males, and to the bird's long, twittering song, which can now be heard in most of the neighborhoods of the continent. If you haven't seen one recently, chances are you can find one at the next bird feeder you come across.

COOL FACTS

- In 1940 a small number of finches were turned loose on Long Island, New York, after failed attempts to sell them as cage birds ("Hollywood finches"). They quickly started breeding and spread across almost all of the eastern United States and southern Canada within the next 50 years
- Plumage coloration ranges from yellow to bright red depending of carotenoid rich foods they eat and the more carotenoid they eat the brighter red they become
- They feed their nestlings exclusively plant food which is rare in the bird world
- They were introduced to Oahu from San Francisco before 1870 and became abundant on all major Hawaiian Islands by 1901
- The oldest known House Finch is 11 years and 7 months old and was female

Brown-headed Cowbird



Brown-headed Cowbird by Dan Kolsky

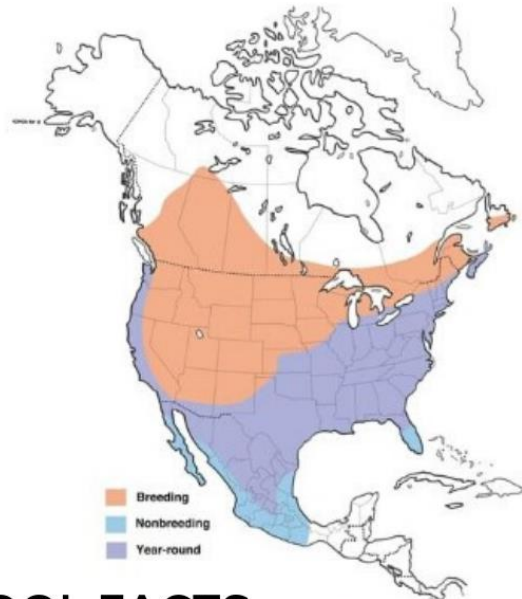
ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Smallish blackbirds, with a shorter tail and thicker head than most other blackbirds.
- The bill has a distinctive shape: it's much shorter and thicker-based than other blackbirds', almost finch-like at first glance.
- Male Cowbirds have glossy black plumage and a rich brown head that often looks black in poor lighting or at distance.
- Female Cowbirds are plain brown birds, lightest on the head and underparts, with fine streaking on the belly and a dark eye.



BASIC DESCRIPTION

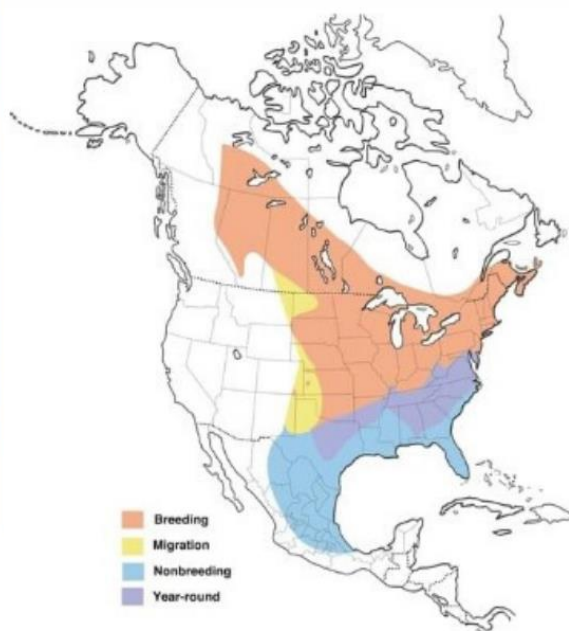
The Brown-headed Cowbird is a stocky blackbird with a fascinating approach to raising its young. Females forgo building nests and instead put all their energy into producing eggs, sometimes more than three dozen a summer. These they lay in the nests of other birds, abandoning their young to foster parents, usually at the expense of at least some of the host's own chicks. Once confined to the open grasslands of middle North America, cowbirds have surged in numbers and range as humans built



COOL FACTS

- A female cowbird makes no nest of her own, but instead lays her eggs in the nests of other bird species, who then raise the young cowbirds.
- Some larger species puncture or grab cowbird eggs and throw them out of the nest. But the majority of hosts don't recognize cowbird eggs at all.

Eastern Phoebe



BASIC DESCRIPTION

One of our most familiar eastern flycatchers, the Eastern Phoebe's raspy "phoebe" call is a frequent sound around yards and farms in spring and summer. These brown-and-white songbirds sit upright and wag their tails from prominent, low perches. They typically place their mud-and-grass nests in protected nooks on bridges, barns, and houses, which adds to the species' familiarity to humans. Hardy birds, Eastern Phoebes winter farther north than most other flycatchers and are one of the earliest returning migrants in spring.

COOL FACTS

- The Eastern Phoebe is a loner, rarely coming in contact with other phoebes
- During egg laying the female frequently chases the male away from her
- In 1804, the Eastern Phoebe became the first banded bird in North America. John James Audubon attached silvered thread to an Eastern Phoebe's leg to track its return in successive years
- Eastern Phoebes may renovate and use old American Robin or Barn Swallow nests

ADULT DESCRIPTION

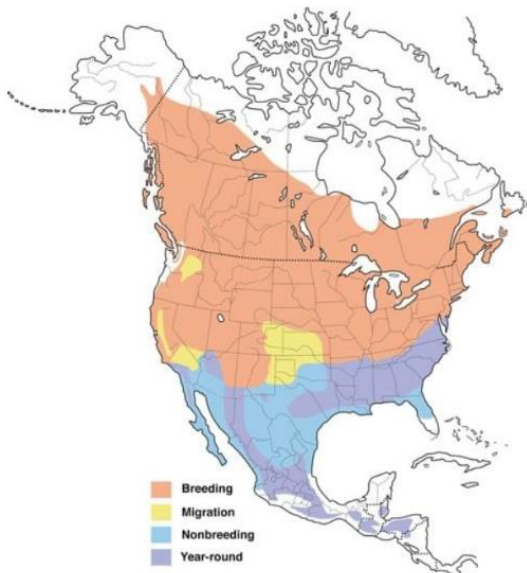
- Brownish-gray above and off-white below, with a dusky wash to the sides of the breast
- In fresh fall plumage show faint yellow on the belly and whitish edging on the folded wing feathers
- The head often appears flat on top
- They have short, thin bills used for catching insects

Chipping Sparrow



COOL FACTS

- After breeding, the Chipping Sparrows move away to molt and find areas where there is more available food
- They build their nests low in shrubs or bushes
- The oldest recorded Chipping Sparrow was 10 years and 11 months





Chipping Sparrow
Spizella passerina
ORDER: Passeriformes
FAMILY: Passerellidae

Sparrows



Habitat
Open Woodlands



Food
Seeds



Nesting
Shrub



Behavior
Ground Forager



Conservation
Low Concern

BASIC DESCRIPTION

A crisp, pretty sparrow whose bright rufous cap both provides a splash of color and makes adults fairly easy to identify. Chipping Sparrows are common across North America wherever trees are interspersed with grassy openings. Their loud, trilling songs are one of the most common sounds of spring woodlands and suburbs.

ADULT DESCRIPTION

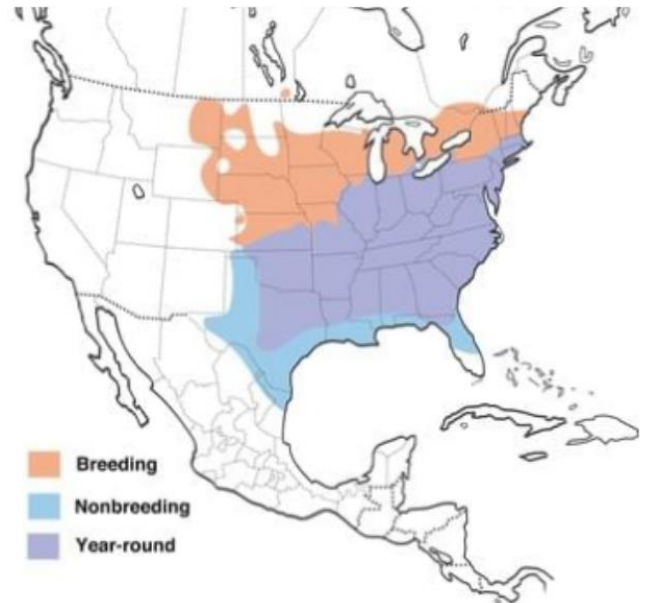
- Rusty colored crown
- Black eyeline
- Greyish belly
- Immature Chipping Sparrows have brown crowns with dark streaks and grey underparts with thin streaks



Field Sparrow



(C) Chris Thomas



BASIC DESCRIPTION

The clear, "bouncing-ball" trill of the Field Sparrow is a familiar summer sound in brushy fields and roadsides of the East and Midwest. The singer is a small, warm-toned sparrow with a rusty cap, neat white eyering, and pink bill. Though still common, Field Sparrows have declined sharply in the last half-century, partly because of the expansion of suburbs, where Field Sparrows will not nest. Populations in the prairies have remained strong thanks in part to measures like the Conservation Reserve Program.

ADULT DESCRIPTION

- A small, slender sparrow with a pink conical bill
- Field Sparrows are overall a warm-colored bird with soft orangey highlights, a brown back with black streaks, and two weak wingbars
- They have a gray face, white eye ring, bright rufous crown, and wide rufous line behind the eye

COOL FACTS

- The oldest known Field Sparrow was at least 10 years and 4 months old
- They sing a clear "bouncing-ball" trill song during spring and summer
- Unmated males will fly at and strike a female on his territory during migration, which appears to seal the deal as the next day she is searching for a nest site.
- Field Sparrows prefer open tall grass fields with small trees and shrubs

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

MALE

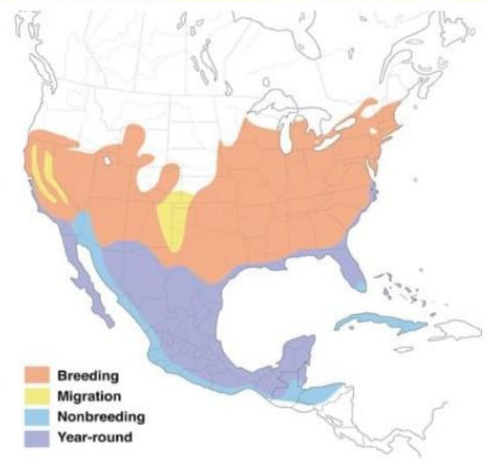


FEMALE



ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Pale blue-gray birds with grayish-white underparts and a mostly black tail with white edges.
- The face is highlighted by a thin but obvious white eye ring
- Slim songbirds with long legs; a long tail; and a thin, straight bill.





Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Poliophtila caerulea
ORDER: Passeriformes
FAMILY: Polioptilidae

Gnatcatchers



Habitat
Forests



Food
Insects



Nesting
Tree



Behavior
Foliage Gleaner



Conservation
Low Concern

BASIC DESCRIPTION

A tiny, long-tailed bird of broadleaf forests and scrublands, the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher makes itself known by its soft but insistent calls and its constant motion. It hops and sidles in dense outer foliage, foraging for insects and spiders. As it moves, this steely blue-gray bird conspicuously flicks its white-edged tail from side to side, scaring up insects and chasing after them. Pairs use spiderweb and lichens to build small, neat nests, which sit on top of branches and look like tree knots.

COOL FACTS

- A pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers can build up to seven nests in a breeding season
- In spite of their name, gnats do not form a significant part of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher's diet
- The oldest known Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was 4 years and 2 months old

Ladder-backed Woodpecker

Male



Female



COOL FACTS

- Over a period of almost 8 years, a female Ladder-backed Woodpecker was seen in Riley County, Kansas, some 300 miles from the nearest part of their normal range. Many birds—even nonmigratory ones like the Ladder-backed, wander a bit out of range, but this wanderer was exceptional
- Most woodpeckers have their four toes arranged in an X-pattern, with two set forward, the other two backward. This allows them to cling to verticle surfaces

ADULT DESCRIPTION

- They have a white and black ladder of stripes that go all the way up the back
- Males have a red crown that extends from the eye to the back of the head
- Females have a buffy patch in front of their eye and do not have any red



Woodpeckers

Ladder-backed
Woodpecker
Dryobates scalaris
ORDER: Piciformes
FAMILY: Picidae



Habitat
Deserts



Food
Insects



Nesting
Cavity



Behavior
Bark Forager



Conservation
Low Concern

BASIC DESCRIPTION

When traveling through the scattered cactus and mesquite of the arid southwestern U.S., it's difficult to believe that these almost treeless habitats are home to woodpeckers. But the Ladder-backed (once known as the "Cactus Woodpecker") is an attractive dweller of deserts, desert scrub, and thorn forests. It can also be found in pinyon pine and pinyon-juniper forest. Like many small dwellers of arid habitats, Ladder-backed Woodpeckers can be inconspicuous and quiet, requiring a bit of time and patience to find. Their small size and agility make them deft foragers among the thorns and spines of plants like cholla, mesquite, and prickly pear.



Black-chinned Hummingbird

MALE



FEMALE



ADULT DESCRIPTION

- A small hummingbird with fairly straight black bill, dull metallic green coloring above, and dull grayish-white coloring below.
- Males have a dark black throat with a thin, iridescent purple base
- Females have a pale throat



COOL FACTS

- Black-chinned hummingbirds are one of the most adaptable hummingbirds, often found in urban areas, disturbed habitat, and natural areas
- When drinking nectar, they extend their tongue at a rate of 13-17 licks/second
- At rest Black-chinned Hummingbird's heart beats an average 480 beats/minute



Hummingbirds

Black-chinned Hummingbird
Archilochus alexandri
ORDER: Caprimulgiformes
FAMILY: Trochilidae



Habitat
Open Woodlands



Food
Nectar



Nesting
Tree



Behavior
Hovering



Conservation
Low Concern

BASIC DESCRIPTION

A small green-backed hummingbird of the West, with no brilliant colors on its throat except a thin strip of iridescent purple bordering the black chin, only visible when light hits it just right. Black-chinned Hummingbirds are exceptionally widespread, found from deserts to mountain forests. Many winter along the Gulf Coast. Often perches at the very top of a bare branch. Low-pitched humming sound produced by wings.

Carolina Wren



ADULT DESCRIPTION

- A chunky song bird with a long upright tail and long slender downcurved bill
- Adults have reddish brown upperparts that contrast with warm buffy-orange underparts
- Carolina Wrens have a long white eyebrow stripe and white throat



BASIC DESCRIPTION

In summer it can seem that every patch of woods in the eastern United States rings with the rolling song of the Carolina Wren. This shy bird can be hard to see, but it delivers an amazing number of decibels for its size. Follow its *teakettle-teakettle!* and other piercing exclamations through backyard or forest, and you may be rewarded with glimpses of this bird's rich cinnamon plumage, white eyebrow stripe, and long, upward-cocked tail. This hardy bird has been wintering farther and farther north in recent decades.

COOL FACTS

- Carolina Wrens actively defend their territories by singing, scolding, and chasing off intruders
- Only the male Carolina Wren sings the loud song, *teakettle-teakettle*
- A captive male sang nearly 3,000 times in a single day
- The oldest known Carolina wren was at least 7 years and 8 months old

Bewick's Wren



ADULT DESCRIPTION

- A medium-size wren with a strikingly long upright tail
- They have dull brown back and gray underside with a bright white eye stripe.
- Bewick's wrens have a barred tail with black tips and white spots.

COOL FACTS

- A young male Bewick's Wren learns to sing from the songs of other males, but his song differs at least by a note or syllable from his fathers
- Bewick's wrens flick their tails from side to side or fans them while foraging.
- They can be build nests in natural habitats or in residential areas. You can buy a nest box to see if a mated pair moves in
- The oldest recorded Bewick's Wren was at least 8 years old



Bewick's Wren
Thryomanes bewickii
ORDER: Passeriformes
FAMILY: Troglodytidae

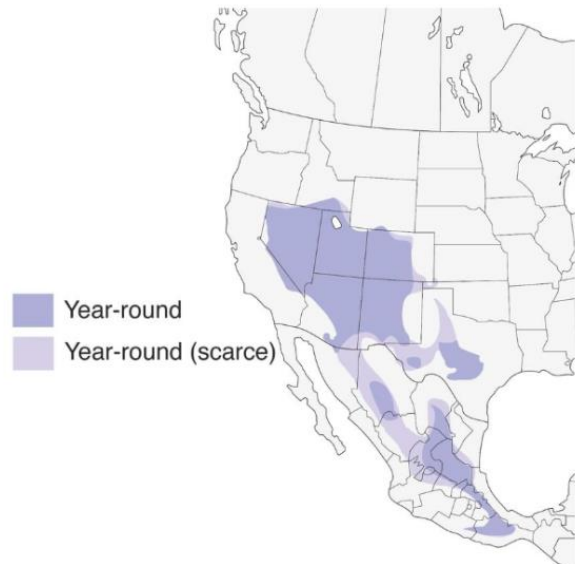
Wrens

 <p>Habitat Open Woodlands</p>	 <p>Food Insects</p>	 <p>Nesting Cavity</p>	 <p>Behavior Foliage Gleaner</p>	 <p>Conservation Low Concern</p>
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BASIC DESCRIPTION

If you come across a noisy, hyperactive little bird with bold white eyebrows, flicking its long tail as it hops from branch to branch, you may have spotted a Bewick's Wren. These master vocalists belt out a string of short whistles, warbles, burrs, and trills to attract mates and defend their territory, or scold visitors with raspy calls. Bewick's Wrens are still fairly common in much of western North America, but they have virtually disappeared from the East.

Woodhouse's Scrub-jay



BASIC DESCRIPTION

The “blue jay” of dry lowlands from Nevada south to Mexico, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay is a dusty blue bird set off by gray-brown and white. It looks very similar to the California Scrub-Jay (they were considered the same species until 2016), but it's a dimmer blue and dingier gray, with almost no necklace, a straighter bill, and higher-pitched calls. The bird's rounded, crestless head immediately sets it apart from Blue Jays and Steller's Jays. These birds are a fixture of dry shrublands and woodlands of pinyon pine and juniper.

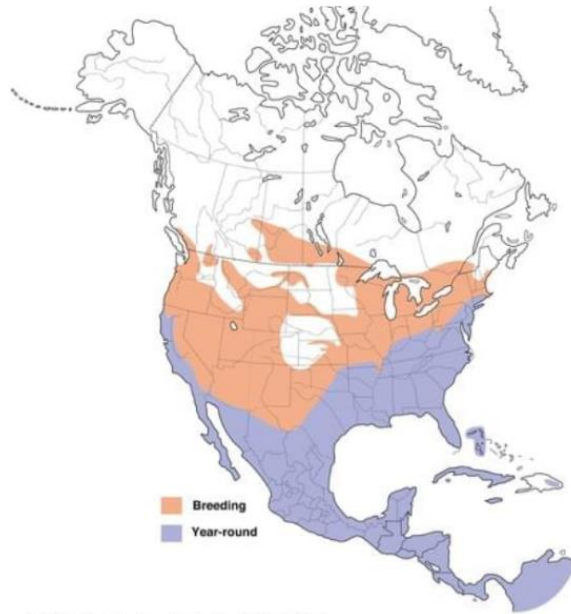
ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Light blue and gray above
- Whitish throat
- Blue band across breast
- Gray belly

COOL FACTS

- Scrub-jays live mainly among pinyon pine trees
- They have adapted thin, pointed bills that get pine nuts hidden between pine cone scales
- Scrub-jays will stand on the backs of mule deer and eat ticks and other parasites off the deer
- They are assertive, vocal and inquisitive
- They eat mostly insects and fruit in the spring and summer times then switch to nuts and seeds during fall and winter

Turkey Vulture





Vultures

Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aura
ORDER: Cathartiformes
FAMILY: Cathartidae



Habitat
Open Woodlands



Food
Carion



Nesting
Cliff



Behavior
Soaring



Conservation
Low Concern

BASIC DESCRIPTION

If you've gone looking for raptors on a clear day, your heart has probably leaped at the sight of a large, soaring bird in the distance— perhaps an eagle or osprey. But if it's soaring with its wings raised in a V and making wobbly circles, it's likely a Turkey Vulture. These birds ride thermals in the sky and use their keen sense of smell to find fresh carcasses. They are a consummate scavenger, cleaning up the countryside one bite of their sharply hooked bill at a time, and never musing a feather on their bald heads.

ADULT DESCRIPTION

- They are large with long wings
- They have a black body from far away with grey flight feathers and tail
- When up close it becomes apparent that they have dark brown wings
- Bright red head

COOL FACTS


- The oldest known Turkey Vulture was 16 years and 10 months old
- They are accustomed to living next to humans and snacking off our leavings
- They teeter when they fly and are unsteady soarers
- They commonly hang in open areas such as roadsides or suburbs
- They hold their wings in a "v-shape" slightly raised

Black Vulture




ADULT DESCRIPTION

- Uniform black bodies except for white patches on the underside of their wingtips
- Short tail
- Broad wings




Vultures


Black Vulture
Coragyps atratus
ORDER: Cathartiformes
FAMILY: Cathartidae




Habitat
Grasslands



Food
Carion



Nesting
Cliff



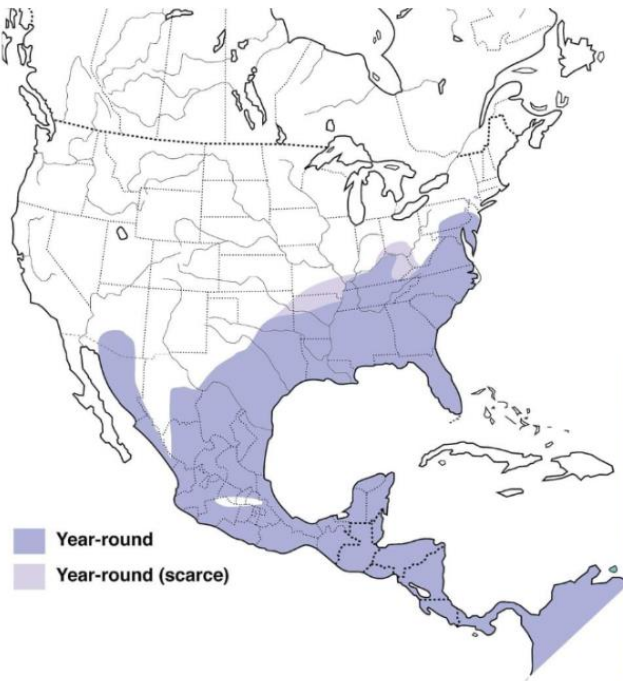
Behavior
Soaring



Conservation
Low Concern

BASIC DESCRIPTION

With sooty black plumage, a bare black head, and neat white stars under the wingtips, Black Vultures are almost dapper. Whereas Turkey Vultures are lanky birds with teetering flight, Black Vultures are compact birds with broad wings, short tails, and powerful wingbeats. The two species often associate: the Black Vulture makes up for its poor sense of smell by following Turkey Vultures to carcasses. Highly social birds with fierce family loyalty, Black Vultures share food with relatives, feeding young for months after they've fledged.



COOL FACTS

- Black Vultures are the most numerous vulture in the Western Hemisphere, however Turkey Vultures outnumber them in the U.S.
- They do not have a voice box so they are limited to making raspy hisses and grunts
- Black Vultures and their relatives live only in North and South America, however around 34 millions years ago they were found in Europe
- The oldest recorded Black Vulture was at least 25 years and 6 months old