

Common Birds of the Estero Bay Area



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Introduction

The following is a guide to the common birds of the Estero Bay Area. Brief descriptions are provided as well as active months and status listings. Photos are primarily courtesy of Greg Smith. Species are arranged by family according to the Sibley Guide to Birds (2000).

Gaviidae

Red-throated Loon

Gavia stellata

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: November-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small loon seldom seen far from salt water. In the non-breeding season they have a grey face and red throat. They have a long slender dark bill and white speckling on their dark back.

Information: These birds are winter residents to the Central Coast. Wintering Red-throated Loons can gather in large numbers in Morro Bay if food is abundant. They are common on salt water of all depths but frequently forage in shallow bays and estuaries rather than far out at sea. Because their legs are located so far back, loons have difficulty walking on land and are rarely found far from water. Most loons must paddle furiously across the surface of the water before becoming airborne, but these small loons can practically spring directly into the air from land, a useful ability on its arctic tundra breeding grounds.

Pacific Loon

Gavia pacifica

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: November-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The Pacific Loon has a shorter neck than the Red-throated Loon. The bill is very straight and the head is very smoothly rounded. During the breeding season the nape of the neck is light grey and stands out against their black neck. The coloration on the back is black, more so than other loons. There are white patches on the side of the neck and on their backs.

Information: A common transient and winter visitor to the inshore and offshore waters of the property. This bird spends more time out at sea than any other loon.

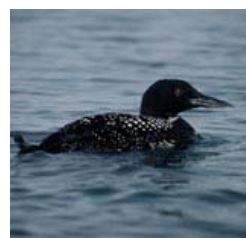
Common Loon

Gavia immer

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: November-April

Federal Status: None



State/Audubon Status: California State Priority List 1(1)

Description: A rather plainly colored bird in the non-breeding season, with a two-toned bill (gray with a black tip). It has a rather thick neck and a white ring around the eye. Their neck has a partial white color below the bill and jagged black and white markings on the back. This bird also shows an apparent “necklace” or bands of white stripes around it’s black neck.

Information: These birds inhabit coastal bays and the ocean during their wintering months. Expert divers, loons have eyes that can focus both in air and under water and they have nearly solid bones that make them heavier than many other birds; they are able to concentrate oxygen in their leg muscles to sustain them during the strenuous paddling that can take them as far as 200 feet (60 meters) below the surface. They primarily eat fish, but they also eat shellfish, frogs, and aquatic insects.

Podicipedidae

Horned Grebe

Podiceps auritus

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: November-March

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small bird with a medium length neck, which is white with a black line down the back. During the breeding season the white is replaced by a rufus color and a solid light yellow patch extends back from the eye. The eye is red and the bill is sharply pointed with a white tip.

Information: These grebes are only occasionally seen in flight; once on the wintering grounds they seldom fly, and they migrate almost entirely at night. Like other grebes, the young can swim and dive immediately after hatching but are often seen riding on the parents' backs. And like other grebes, the Horned Grebe swallows large numbers of its own feathers, which lodge in the stomach and prevent fish bones from passing into the intestines.

Eared Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: October-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small, slender-necked, slender-billed grebe.

In winter plumage, dark gray above, white below; neck dusky.

Similar in winter to Horned Grebe, but chunkier, and bill appears slightly upturned, sides of their face are smudged with gray, and has a whitish patch behind ear. In the breeding season this bird is predominately rufus and black with wispy yellow lines extending from the eye.

Information: Unlike the Horned Grebe, which supplements its diet with small fish, the Eared Grebe feeds almost exclusively on aquatic insects and small crustaceans. These



birds are highly gregarious, not only nesting in large, dense, and noisy colonies but also assembling in large flocks in winter.

Pied-billed Grebe

Podilymbus podiceps

Occurrence: Common; Uncommonly seen year-round.

Active Months: September-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A pigeon-sized bird with a brown body with a gray back. The bill is rather thick and turns white with a black ring when in the breeding season; the chin also turns black. The eye is dark with a slight ring surrounding it.

Information: These birds are winter residents and can also be seen breeding on the central coast. They typically nest in open bodies of water where they lay their eggs on a floating mass of vegetation that is anchored to surrounding emergent vegetation. The Pied-billed Grebe eats small fish, crustaceans, and aquatic insects but is especially fond of crayfish, which it crushes easily with its stout bill. When alarmed, this grebe often sinks slowly into the water, resurfacing out of sight among the reeds.

Western Grebe

Aechmophorus occidentalis

Occurrence: Common; Uncommonly seen in breeding season.

Active Months: October-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A large slender bird with a rather long neck. The neck is white below the bill and black on the back extending from the rear to up and over the head. The eye is red, and the bill is long and thin with a slight upturn to it. In the breeding season the black on the back of the neck covers the eye and the bill becomes a dull olive-yellow color.

Information: During migration, Western Grebes fly in loose flocks but spread out to feed during the day. On their coastal wintering grounds these birds often fall victim to oil spills and to insecticides that accumulate in their food, build up in their bodies, and reduce their breeding success. The mating display of the Western Grebe is an awesome sight, with both members of the pair paddling vigorously and churning across the surface of the water in an upright posture. This behavior is occasionally seen in this area.

Clark's Grebe

Aechmophorus clarkii

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: October-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Almost identical to the Western Grebe, but slightly smaller. The breeding plumage is different in that the eye is surrounded by white, not black, and the bill is a bright yellow rather than dull olive color.

Information: This bird and the Western Grebe are considered separate species because they nest side by side but very little interbreeding occurs. In most respects the two species are very much alike.

Hydrobatidae

Ashy Storm-petrel

Oceanodroma homochroa

Occurrence: Individual record

Active Months: August-December

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC), Federal Species of Concern (FCC)

State/Audubon Status: California State List 3/Audubon List Red

Description: This bird has a very robust head that appears to have a flat spot on the top. It is mostly a darker gray all together, with the back and undersides of the wing being much lighter. The tail is medium long and forked.

Information: Sightings of this bird are few; however, this bird most likely is a common visitor to offshore waters in early summer and late fall. They tend to flock in large numbers when out at sea.

Pelecanidae

Brown Pelican

Pelecanus occidentalis

Occurrence: Common; Uncommonly seen in breeding season.

Active Months: March-November

Federal Status: Federally endangered (FE)

State/Audubon Status: Fully Protected Species (FP)

Description: A very large, stocky bird with a dark brown body and a long flat “pelican” bill. It is the only non-white Pelican in the world.

Information: This species of seabird is listed as endangered due to human disturbances and the use DDT pesticides. They are now faced with an unusual impact to their population: roads which appear as water on hot days. They dive into the mirage and injure themselves as they impact the concrete. These birds are resident to the Pacific Coast from Southern California south. They are often seen flying in a line right in cresting waves. These birds feed mainly on fish, in which they make a twisting plunge from the air into the water.



Phalacrocoracidae

Double-crested Cormorant

Phalacrocorax auritus

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: California State List 2

Description: A larger black bird with orange throat pouch and long neck. Breeding birds have white plumes on the sides of the head.

Information: These birds nest in colonies, usually in trees or rocky cliffs, with nests made from seaweed and other coastal debris. Flying with a crooked neck and orange throat pouch makes these birds unmistakable to identify.



Pelagic Cormorant

Phalacrocorax pelagicus

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The smallest and most delicate of the Pacific cormorants. They are a glossy black with a dark bill. They have a long slender neck held out straight in flight. During the breeding season, they have an iridescent hue and a small red patch below the eye on the bill.

Information: Its habitat is usually close to the sea, in which they feed mostly on fish and crustaceans. They nest in colonies near the shore; with nests built from seaweed and other coastal debris. These nests are used year after year and they can become quite large.

Brandt's Cormorant

Phalacrocorax penicillatus

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A larger bird with a very robust head. Breeding birds have a bright cobalt-blue throat pouch bordered with yellow, and slender white plumes on face and back.

Information: They nest in colonies on rocky cliffs or islands. You can distinguish them from other Cormorants by their thick neck and large head when in flight.



Ardeidae

Least Bittern

Ixobrychus exilis

Occurrence: Rare, common to eastern North America

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: California Species of Concern 3/ None

Active Months: May-August

Description: The smallest heron in North America; growing to 13 inches at maturity. Has a rather long neck for its size, yet is typically seen crouching looking for prey. This bird is light brown throughout with a black back and cap.

Information: In the early summer of 2005, two subadults were sighted. County records for this species are scarce, and this sighting is assumed to be this was the first time this species was seen at the MSSB. They resided in the Cloister mitigation wetland area, and it is possible that this sighting represented individuals moving to the MSSB during the day to forage.

Great Blue Heron

Ardea herodias

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None



Description: A large blue-gray bird with a long, slightly crooked, neck. It has black plumes that extend from the forehead that appear as long “eyebrows”. In flight, the wings are two toned with outer portion being black and the inner portion gray like the rest of the body. The bill is long with a greenish to yellowish tone.

Information: The Great Blue Heron is one of the most common herons in North America. They feed on a wide variety of food, such as fish, mice, various invertebrates, and small birds, which enables them to inhabit pretty much anywhere. They commonly forage alone, standing tall, and stationary. These birds typically roost in colonies in large trees made from debris and often go undetected. When the leaves of trees begin to fall, large nests become quite apparent.

Great Egret

Ardea alba

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: August-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A large all white bird with long black legs and feet and a bright yellow bill. These birds have a long neck and in flight the neck becomes quite bowed. Similar to the Snowy Egret, but has long plumes on the rump.

Information: Majestic and quite striking, the Great Egret is facing danger in the near future. The destruction of wetlands due to urbanization has led to a shift of the breeding range north, which can lead to their absence here on the Central Coast. This bird has already recovered from impacts caused from sport-hunting. Like the Great Blue Heron, this bird feeds on a wide variety of organisms, such as fish, mice, and reptiles. They inhabit tidal flats, estuaries, and shallow lakes and usually forage by standing tall and walking slowly. Nests are large and platform like and made of sticks. Often re-used. 3-6 pale blue eggs per clutch. Nestlings are semi-altricial and downy and tended by both parents. Young can fly with adults by 6-8 weeks.



Snowy Egret

Egretta thula

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: August-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: An all white bird, much smaller than the Great Egret, with yellow feet and a darker bill. Has a slight feathery projection on the lower neck, also has a yellow patch on the side of the face. The plumes on the rear are “lacy” which is quite different from the Great Egret.

Information: They commonly feed on small fish in which they catch by running- this makes them very distinguishable from the Great Egret.



Green Heron

Butorides virescens

Occurrence: Uncommon, nesting

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None



Description: Smaller than the Snowy Egret, this stocky bird is very strikingly colored. The neck is a deep red that blends into a teal colored back and wing. The top of the head is black that blends into a long sharply pointed dark bill.

Information: This bird is very secretive and solitary and can be found foraging in wooded water masses. Their foraging strategy is quite unique. The herons obtain “bait” as diverse as live insects, berries, twigs, and discarded crackers, and cast them out onto the water. They then crouch and wait for fish to appear. They are able to fish without bait, however, employing the “fishing” method increases their feeding efficiency. Nest platforms are smaller than those of Great Egrets (inside diameter is about 4-5 inches). 3-6 pale greenish-blue eggs per clutch. Semi-altricial and downy young are tended by both parents and independent in about 30-35 days.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Very different from the other heron-type birds, this bird is quite stalky and has a large head fixed on top of a short neck. The head is all black, as well as the rest of the back, with a grayish white coloration on the wings and underbelly. The bill is dark colored and very thick, and the red eye is makes this bird quite distinguishable.

Information: These birds feed at night, unlike the other heron-type birds, in which they stand still at long lengths of time waiting for food to pass by. These birds eat a large variety of organisms, such as frogs, reptiles, other bird chicks, and small rodents. These birds are quite noisy, and their call can be described as a bark, like a small dog. They roost in trees or in reeds in estuarine or marshy areas.



Anatidae

Canada Goose *Branta Canadensis*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: November- March

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: These are rather large birds with a weight ranging from 3.5-9.8 lbs. They have a black head and bill with a white stripe under the chin. The bill is similar to most waterfowl, but rather short. The body is brownish in color and can be considered striped, although the lining of feathers gives that impression. Where the neck meets the body, there is white stripe that separates the two.

Information: These birds are common migrants to this area. They typically forage on the seeds of grasses and sedges, bulbs, grains, berries, and on occasion insects and tiny crustaceans. When these birds are in flight, they form a “V” pattern very high in the air.



These birds pair for life and the young migrate with the parents and return to the breeding grounds, where the old gander finally drives them off.

Ross' Goose

Chen rossii

Occurrence: Individual record

Active Months: November- March

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This all white bird does not get as large as the

Canada Goose. There are some individuals that tend to have large dark patches. Overall, this species has a short orange bill, with a round head and shorter neck.

Information: They tend to inhabit protected coastal lagoons, and they usually feed on aquatic vegetation and terrestrial invertebrates.



Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Resident

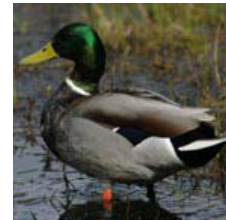
Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A very familiar species to most people: The male

has a dark green head, with a brown chest and a pale body. The rump feathers are black and when the wings are spread out the presence of a blue speculum with white borders is seen. The female of this species is all brown and very drab in coloration, with an orange bill that has a black spot on the center.

Information: This well known species is a common winter migrant to this area. It has been recorded that there are breeding populations in this county, and one such site occurs on the property. These birds can be found in any wetland habitat in which they feed on vegetation. Nests are lined with leaf litter, grasses, and down feathers. 7-12 light colored eggs per clutch. Nestlings are precocial and downy, take to water soon after hatching and tended by female. Fledge by 6-7 weeks.



Gadwall

Anas strepera

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

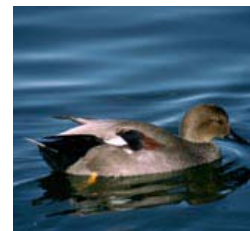
Active Months: September-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A very drab colored bird, mostly gray with a white patch on the wings known as the speculums. The female of this species is mostly brown when compared to the male.

Information: This bird is uncommon to this area. When these birds are foraging they tip almost upside down with their rump sticking up in the air to reach the plants on the bottom. They tend to inhabit marshy or shallow ponds.

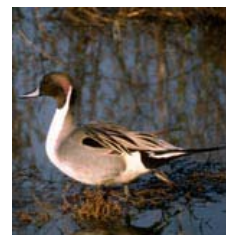


Northern Pintail

Anas acuta

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: August- April



Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A rather slender and elegant bird that has a long neck and long slender wings. The female of this species is a plain colored brown with a dark gray bill. The males have a gray body and white neck that leads to an all brown body. The tail is long and the males have a green speculum with white borders on the outer wings.

Information: These birds are common on freshwater ponds in smaller flocks. They nest on the ground in sparse grassy vegetation. 90% of their diet consists of vegetation (i.e. seeds, aquatic vegetation, sedge grain), while occasionally feeding on tadpoles, minnows, and aquatic invertebrates.

American Wigeon

Anas americana

Occurrence: Seasonally common

Active Months: October-March

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Generally, this species has a rounded head with a slightly long and pointed tail and short lightly blue bill. In flight the adults of this species have a very noticeable white patch on the upper portion of the wing. The males, in the breeding season, have white forehead, with a green wash down the side of the head. The rest of the body is a pinkish to brown color. The female lacks the head coloration in which it appears gray in color.

Information: These birds in general are among the most abundant winter migrants of all “dabbling ducks” wintering in California. These birds are able to feed on a wide variety of food which is one the main factors in their ability to sustain high numbers.

Northern Shoveler

Anas platyrhynchos

Occurrence: Seasonally common

Active Months: September-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: These large distinctive billed birds are somewhat similar to the Mallards. The female is a mottled brown with orange legs. The male has a green head that ends at the base of the neck. The breast and part of the body is white, the flanks and belly are an orange-red color, and the back and tail are black. When in flight the secondary wing feathers are a deep green color.

Information: These birds are common to marshy ponds in which they gather in small flocks. They mainly feed on aquatic vegetation, especially plankton, while occasionally feeding on snails, clams, and aquatic insects.

Cinnamon Teal

Anas cyanoptera

Occurrence: Seasonally common

Active Months: September-March

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None



Description: The bill on this species is very similar to the Northern Shoveler in length. The female is a drab brown color while the male is mostly a dark deep red when in its breeding plumage. In flight the outer wings are green on the secondaries while the tertials are a dull blue on the females and a pale blue on the males.

Information: These birds are common on shallow ponds in or near aquatic vegetation. They commonly consume seeds from aquatic vegetation as well as snails and insects. It has been seen that these birds are fragile in the face of human civilization. The draining of ponds and wetlands for homes has heavily impacted the populations of this species in South America.

Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: October-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The smallest of the dabbling ducks in North America. The female is a drab brown with a small slender bill. The male is very brilliantly colored during the breeding season. The head is a dark rufous color with a green eye wash that flows down towards the body. The body is mostly gray with a white bar near the breast and the rump has a buffy streak. In the flight both individuals have green secondaries with white or buffy bars bordering it.

Information: Common in very shallow marshes or in flooded fields. In the time spent on the property these birds mostly feed on grain, grass, seeds, and plant shoots. They tend to nest in well concealed areas of tall grass, forbs, and brush. The young of this species is the fastest growing of any dabbling duck in North America.



Canvasback *Aythya valisineria*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

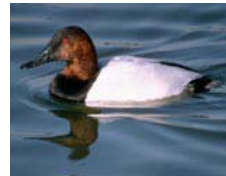
Active Months: November-March

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The male of this species has a very deep colored red and brown head that ends at the black portion of the neck. The rest of the body is white with a black tail. The female is similar in coloration structure, however, more drab in coloration. The bill on this species is rather long and very distinctive.

Information: This species tends to breed in open freshwater ponds, marshes, or lakes bordered by emergent vegetation. Their diet consists of aquatic vegetation and invertebrates, especially small clams. They dive underneath the surface to forage. An interesting note on this species is that the females tend to migrate to the same breeding grounds each year, while males almost never do so. Pairs are only formed for that season, but never for subsequent years.



Redhead *Aythya americana*

Occurrence: Seasonally common

Active Months: November-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A very distinctive “diving duck”. The male has bright red colored head with a black breast and tail, while the rest of the body is gray. The bill is a very distinctive blue with a black tip. The female is a very sharp departure, with the body being a pale and dull brown color with a blue gray bill.

Information: The breeding grounds consist of any type of standing water that is surrounded by emergent vegetation. They nest in shallow water concealed by the surrounding plants. They form a heavy basket of rushes and cattails atop dead aquatic vegetation, lined with down and other soft items. They typically feed on aquatic vegetation and aquatic invertebrates. The females of this species have three strategies of nesting: 1) incubate their own clutch, 2) incubate their clutch and deposit some eggs in other nests, or 3) deposit all of their eggs in other nests. These females tend to use up 50% of their fat reserves to lay eggs and another 30% during incubation. This nesting strategy can be attributed to their energy budgeting.

Ring-necked Duck

Aythya collaris

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: October-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The male of this species is mostly black, with a white ring on the neck and gray flanks. The bill has a white outline with a black tip, and the head has a distinctive sharp peak to the rear crown. The female is a darker brown overall, with gray cheeks and pale flanks, and a faint ring on the neck. The female also has a white eye ring and gray bill with a black tip and in flight the outer wing has a gray stripe on the secondaries.



Information: This is an uncommon bird to most of North America, but a few have been seen during the breeding season (October-April). They typically nest in marshes especially those surrounded by vegetation. They dive in shallow water to feed on plants and seeds.

Red breasted Merganser

Mergus serrator

Occurrence: Seasonally common

Active Months: November-April

Description: A striking bird when in the breeding plumage. The head is dark with a “whispy crest” in back. They have a dark brown chest spot that shows just above the water line. The rest of the body is mostly grey with the back itself having black and white patches.

Information: A gregarious species, where they typically are found nesting close together as well as feeding in large groups. Their foraging strategy is quite unique; as a group they force schools of fish into shallow waters in order to nab their food. They typically form large broods of females, where the male is rarely seen. The pair bond never breeds for a second year.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: November-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A distinctive billed sea bird. The bill is a multi-colored triangular bill of orange and white with a black patch on each side. The male is mostly black with a white patch on the back of the neck and top of the forehead. The female is a mottled brownish black color with no distinctive marks other than the bill.

Information: Uncommon to this area, some sightings have been recorded. They typically forage on the breaking surf searching for mollusks and crustaceans, and especially fish eggs. They nest in Mexico and were once considered declining in the early 1900's but now numbers are considered stable.



White-winged Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: October-June

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The largest scoter, the bill is very distinctive; long with a forward extension of feathers and red and orange at the tip. The body of the male is mostly a brown and black with a white paint brush stroke on the eye. The female is mostly a brown color with an oval patch on the lorals. In flight, this species reveals a white patch on the secondary flight feathers in which it gets its name.

Information: While this species is uncommon it can typically be seen foraging out in the ocean for mollusks and clams.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: November-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The male of this species is magnificently colored with a large white patch on the back of the head and white overall and an iridescent wash on the face and down the back. The head is relatively large and round. The female is mostly dark gray and brown color with a smaller white patch on the side of the head.

Information: Typically forage for mollusks and crustaceans as well as insect larvae out on lakes and bays.

Ruddy duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Occurrence: Seasonally common

Active Months: Sept-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Seen typically in the non-breeding season when



distinctive colorations are not apparent. The male is a mottled gray, with white cheeks and a gray bill and black cap. During the breeding season the body turns a deep red color and the bill becomes a distinctive blue. The female of this species is a brown and orange color with dark lines across the cheeks. The tail of this sex is long and often is raised up in the air.

Information: This bird has the ability to sink and disappear from sight under water. They are unable to walk upright on land, and typically flee from danger by diving underwater rather than flying away. They most commonly feed on plant material, insect larvae, and mollusks, usually on ponds, lakes, and bay inlets.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*

Occurrence: Rare in this County

Active Months: Possibly seen year round

Federal Status: Federal Species of Concern

State/Audubon Status: California Species of Concern 3/None

Description: A rather drab looking bird in the non-breeding season. Mostly deep brown and white mark on the side of the head and the bill is quite small. In the breeding season this bird is intricately marked; black and white striping alternates on the body with red on the top of the head and on the sides of the body.

Information: Typically breed on fast flowing rivers and in the wintering season they tend to forage off the coast near rocky shores. This species was documented at MSSB south in 2005 at the Azure St. parking lot.

Cathartidae

Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aura



Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A large dark bird with a with a wing span of about 6 ft. Adults have a bald reddish colored head while Juveniles have grayish-brown heads. The underside of their primary and secondary feathers is white as is the underside of their tail feathers.

Information: These birds are carrion eaters. They fly high overhead as they forage, often in a dihedral pattern with wings over head forming a “V,” and rocking or tilting from side-to-side. Nests and roosts in caves, trees or in hollow stumps. Young are semialtricial.

Accipitridae

Northern Harrier

Circus cyaneus



Occurrence: Locally common, nesting

Active Months: Resident at “Sea West”

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC)

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Juveniles and females are brown and rust color with striped wing markings while adult males are grey above with black markings on the edges of the primary and secondary feathers. This raptor has elongated wings and tail. The tail has many dark bands, the lowermost being the widest. They have a small two-toned hooked bill.

Information: Also called the Marsh Hawk, they are commonly seen foraging over the low-laying area on the property, in particular, the wetland areas and surrounding grassland hillsides. They fly low to the ground, skimming above the vegetation as they forage for small mammals and reptiles. Breeding season starts in mid-spring. They commonly nest in tall grasses or under shrubs in grasslands that overlook wetlands. Their nests are made of small sticks and reeds and lined with grasses and are about 15-30 inches in diameter. They have a single brood with 4-6 light bluish eggs. Nestlings are altricial and downy.

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Accipter striatus

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: September-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: North America's smallest accipter, the Sharp-shinned Hawk has a small head and broad wings. Juveniles are dark brown above with a brownish-red mottled chest. Adults are grey above with rusty chest and have red eyes. Both have wide dark bands the length of the tail and yellow legs. The adults are not sexually dimorphic.

Information: Wings are held straight out from body while gliding and they have very quick wing beats. These raptors hunt on the fly and primarily eat small birds.

Cooper's Hawk

Accipter cooperii

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: September-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A medium sized accipter with an elongated tail. Similar to the Sharp-shinned Hawk, it is slightly larger with a rather long head and neck.

Information: Solitary. Feeds on small birds and mammals captured in surprise attack.



White-tailed Kite

Elanus leucurus

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: Federal Species of Concern (FSC)

State/Audubon Status: Fully Protected Species (FP)

Description: A small hawk; slender and long-tailed. Very white overall, with conspicuous white tail and contrasting black shoulders. Red eyes. Juveniles have a buffy wash near chest that fades within a few weeks.



Information: Common in open fields and marshes, where scattered bushes and posts provide perches. Not gregarious in daytime, but may gather in large nocturnal roosts. Hunts by hovering and pouncing on prey such as voles, snakes, lizards, frogs and large insects.

Red-shouldered Hawk

Buteo lineatus

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A compact, accipiter-like buteo with quick, choppy wingbeats. Shorter-winged and longer-tailed than other widespread buteos. Adults have rufous shoulder patches, rust red body, and underwing lining. Immatures have brown streaked, whitish underparts and less apparent red on shoulders. All plumages show distinctive pale translucent crescent across outer primaries and a heavily banded tail apparent from both above and below.

Information: Fairly common in dense woods with clearings and water. Solitary. Can hunt by soaring at high altitudes in search of prey, but mainly hunts from a perch. Nests are flat and relatively loose, and are made of twigs, sticks, and dead leaves lined with lichen, bark strips and green leaves. Clutches consist of 2-4 dull white blotched eggs. Nestlings are born semialtricial and downy and leave the nest in about 35 days.



Red-tailed Hawk

Buteo jamaicensis

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Large hawk. Plumage is variable; dark brown above, most typically light below with a dark belly band.

Rufous tail has a narrow dark band and light tip. Finely streaked grayish tail of immature is often light at base.

Information: This hawk is solitary and hunts mainly from a perch, choosing the same sentinel perch day after day; also hunts from the air by soaring at high altitudes and snatching up prey from the ground in talons. Nests are made of sticks and twigs and are usually placed in the crotch of a tree between 15-70 feet from the ground. Clutches consist of 2-3 bluish-white eggs speckled with brown. Nestlings are born semiatricial and leave the nest within 45 days.



Ferruginous Hawk

Bueto regalis

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: October-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The largest buteo in North America, this hawk has a light and dark phase. Light morph birds are reddish or brownish above, with white underparts, dark leg-

feathering, and a pale tail. Dark morph birds less common and are dark overall, with white flight feathers and a narrow white crescent on underside of wrist.

Information: Inhabits arid grasslands and other treeless areas. Hunts from the air or a perch, mainly for small mammals. Often perches on the ground, unlike most other buteos.

Golden Eagle

Aquila chrysaetos

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC)

State/Audubon Status: California State List 3

Description: This bird is dark brown overall with a golden nape, usually only visible at close range. Legs are feathered down to the talons. Immatures in flight show large white wing patch at base of primaries and white tail with dark terminal band. Shaped like a hawk, but wingspan is much larger and flight is very steady.

Information: Inhabits grasslands, deserts and other open country relatively far from people. Hunts mainly mammals, especially squirrels and rabbits, from prominent perch or from the air, contouring over hillsides or soaring high above.



Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

Occurrence: Individual record

Active Months: November-March

Federal Status: Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC)

State/Audubon Status: California State Endangered (SE), Fully Protected Species (FP)

Description: A very large and dark bird, with plank-like wings and relatively large head and bill. Adults are distinctive, with white head and tail. Juveniles are dark with white underwing coverts, whitish streaks on tail, and pale belly.

Information: Usually solitary, but may gather in groups at prime locations such as salmon runs or waterfowl staging areas. This bird is a versatile and agile hunter, hunting from a perch or from the air. Feeds mainly on fish, waterfowl, and mammals captured or scavenged.



Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A large, long winged “fish hawk”. These birds are brown above and white below; head white with dark line through eye and on side of the face. At a distance can resemble a gull.

Information: A very unique species among most birds of prey, these birds are fish specialists which they capture by hovering above and then plunging in the water feet first. Once the fish is caught, this bird always holds the fish with the head facing forward. These birds can also “gut” a fish using their sharp bill with ease.



Falconidae

American Kestrel

Falco sparverius

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A rather small falcon, with the wing span usually no more than 25 inches. The male of this species has a red tail with a black tip and the back is also red. The wings are a very distinctive gray, and the belly is light with spotting. The female is mostly red with black stripes, lacking the gray wing color. The species as a whole can be identified by the distinctive tail bob while perching.

Information: This species has very keen eyesight and typically hovers while it hunts. Its diet consists mostly of insects and the occasional small mammal. They are cavity nesters and usually in or near open land.



Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Residents to the county, Uncommon

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC),
Federal Species of Concern (FSC)

State/Audubon Status: State Endangered (SE),
Fully Protected Species (FP)

Description: A large robust falcon with a black hood and wide black “mustaches.” A very distinct downward pointed bill and a uniformly patterned under wing.

Information: These birds were once listed as endangered due to DDT pesticides causing thinning of their egg shells. They nest on rocky cliffs and building ledges with little nesting lining. There are breeding adults found on Morro Rock and are beginning to expand their range. These birds feed mostly on medium-sized birds by diving at incredible speeds to catch their prey. Some Peregrines have been clocked at speeds up to 220 mph!



Phasianidae

California Quail

Callipepla californica

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A very distinct species and can be identified by their call which sounds like “Where are you?” or “Chicago!” The species as a whole is very robust in size. The male has a large black top notch and black chin. The belly appears to be scaled and the head has a red cap. The female also has the notch but it is not as pronounced, and they lack the head coloration of the males.



Information: These birds are very social usually found in large flocks. They are commonly seen on the roadside or on the brushy edges of trails. Their diet consists of insects, flowers, and new fruits. Usually nests on the ground with 6-28 speckled eggs per nest. Nestlings are downy and precocial and very active after hatching.

Rallidae

American Coot *Fulica americana*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: Year round

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A distinctive black duck-like bird with a large white bill and a stubby tail. The male and female features are essentially the same.

Information: These birds are common to ponds and lakes, however, they are uncommon to Sea West. They graze on grass or they dive for aquatic vegetation for food.



Sora *Porzana carolina*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: September-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A cryptically colored bird with a stout yellow bill and a dark face and gray breast. They have long yellow legs and a short pointed tail and they are laterally compressed.

Information: A solitary bird that has a surprisingly loud call. They have the ability to walk on emergent vegetation by using their rather long “toes”. They are often seen walking on the edge of wet marshes surrounded by grassy vegetation. They often feed on seeds and insects.

Charadriidae

Western Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus nivosu*

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: Federally threatened, Bird of Conservation Concern

State/Audubon Status: California Species of Concern 2/None

Description: Fairly small with light brown and white colorations and a pointed bill and slate colored legs. Breeding birds have black bar across forehead.

Information: Resident to this area as well as up and down the Pacific Coast. Nest on bare sand in coastal debris near the ocean-side of the foredunes. Federally listed as threatened due to human impacts, such as foot traffic and recreation vehicles, during the breeding season. One of the last of the larger breeding populations occurs here in the Estero Bay, including MSSB south. State Parks has taken steps to educate the public and minimize impact by fencing off nesting sites. Despite short successes, the long term survival of the



Snowy Plover is still not certain. No nests have been documented at the MSSB north, where recreational activity and a lack of protection may prohibit nesting.

Killdeer

Charadrius vociferus

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Largest of the “ringed” plovers. It has two distinctive 2 black breast bands, with brown back and white underbelly and a longer tail and legs.

Information: These birds inhabit open areas and found mostly more inland. Their call is a distinctive “Killdeer!” They nest in shallow depressions in the ground lined with grass, pebbles and seaweeds. Usually 4 speckled eggs per clutch and 1-3 clutches per year. Nestlings are precocial and downy and very camouflaged.



Black-bellied Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

Occurrence: Common; uncommon year round

Active Months: August-May.

Description: A quail-sized plover, the winter adults are gray with dark and light patches, but face and breast are white like the belly.

Information: These birds are usually the first to take flight when a flock of shorebirds are disturbed. They winter here on the Central Coast, and many people say these birds have one of the most melodious songs of all shorebirds.

Semipalmated Plover

Charadrius semipalmatus

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: August-May

Description: A brown-backed plover with white under parts and 1 distinctive black breast band. They have a stubby, yellow-orange, black tipped bill.

Information: These birds winter here after the breeding season.

Their feeding behavior consists of short quick bursts followed by a pause to scan for any signs of moving insects. Depending on their posture, the size of their neck bands can change.



Heamatopodidae

Black Oystercatcher

Haematopus bachmani

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC),
Federal Species of Concern (FSC)

State/Audubon Status: Audubon List Yellow

Description: A large black bird with a distinctive straight red bill. And yellow ring around red eye.



Information: These birds use their thick long bill to pry open or cut the clamping muscles of bivalves, including the oyster by which it gets its name. They nest in pebbly sand in a shallow depression or on bare ground. Nests on rocks on or near the coast. Nests usually lined with smaller pebbles. Four large tan eggs with dark speckles.

Scolopacidae

Greater Yellowlegs

Tringa melanoleuca

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: August-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A plainly colored gray bird with a long pointed bill, a white belly, and long yellow legs.

The bill is longer than the head.

Information: It is a noisy alert bird that typically forages in shallow water no deeper than the belly. They run in the water chasing tadpoles, little fish, and the occasional crustacean.



Lesser Yellowlegs

Tringa flavipes

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: August-October, March-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This species is very similar to the Greater Yellowlegs. It is, though, more delicate and compactly built and the bill is shorter and is equal in length with the head.

Information: Tends to form larger flocks than the Greater and primarily feeds on insects and crustaceans. This species also “chases” its prey prior to consumption.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: August-May

Federal Status: Bird of Conservation Concern

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small pallid shorebird when found on the coast.

Overall, they have a pale gray back and pure white underparts, a short black bill, and black legs. For confirmation, look at the feet because they lack a hind toe, the only sandpiper with this characteristic. Also, in flight they show a black leading edge with a broad white wing stripe.

Information: This sandpiper is common to the shores of the central coast in the spring and summer. Usually a group will congregate at the shores edge feeding on food that has been washed up on shore, and then they will retreat before the incoming wave reaches them. These birds are arctic nesting shorebirds and rarely, if at all, breed here on the central coast.



Spotted Sandpiper

Actitis macularia

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: August-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small bird that has distinctive bold spots on the belly and breast. The back and head are an off brown while the belly is white with spots mentioned previously. The bill is orange and protrudes no longer than the length of the head.

Information: Distinctive habits of this bird are the constant waving of its tail up and down and the fluttering across the water on vibrating downcurved wings for a short distance before returning to shore. They forage on insects, crustaceans, and small fish usually near ponds and marshy areas.



Long-billed Curlew

Numenius americanus

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: September-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: It has a speckled brown and gray body with a long downward curved bill and long legs.

Information: This bird inhabits mudflats, salt marshes, and sandy beaches. It is mostly seen on the shoreline feeding on crustaceans and mollusks as well as seeds and berries.



Willet

Catoptrophorus semipalmatus

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: Bird of Conservation Concern

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A large shorebird with a long pointed bill, and a distinctive black and white “flash” pattern on the wings.

Information: These birds are found here on the coast year round, typically inhabiting the shoreline foraging for food. They fly together calling back and forth to each other before landing on the beach. They nest in open ground usually lined with shells, grass, or weeds.



Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: April and August during migration stopover

Federal Status: Federal Species of Concern, Bird of Conservation Concern

State/Audubon Status: None/Audubon List Yellow

Description: A large shorebird with a down curved bill and uniformly brown body.

Information: Seen during migration to and from Southern California.



Marbled Godwit

Limosa fedoa

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: August-May, Common

Federal Status: Federal Species of Concern, Bird of Conservation Concern

State/Audubon Status: None/Audubon's List Yellow

Description: A crow-sized shorebird, dark and mottled above, cinnamon-buff below, with cinnamon wing linings and long pinkish upturned bill.

Information: This bird winters here on the Central Coast before it moves inland to breed in the open prairies. It usually inhabits the salt marshes and beach regions of the Central Coast.



Black Turnstone

Arenaria melanocephala

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: August-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Their winter plumage is a dusky black with an unstreaked white belly; their bill is short and slightly upturned. In flight shows a black and white pattern on the body.

Information: These birds winter on the coast of the Pacific ranging from Alaska south to Mexico. They tend to inhabit seaweed covered coastal regions.



Surfbird

Aphriza virgata

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: August-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Seen uncommonly during the non-breeding season. The males and females are the same being mostly grey with a stout two-toned bill and short yellow legs.

Information: They typically winter on rocky coasts in small flocks. Their diet consists of insects and crustaceans that they are able to pick from rocks.

Western Sandpiper

Calidris mauri

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: July-May, Common.

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A mottled colored bird with a straight bill that has a slight downward curve to its tip.

Information: It winters here and is one of the most common shorebirds found on the Pacific Coast. Its signature "peep" call is heard constantly. They inhabit tidal mud flats as well as the shoreline. When their feeding grounds are flooded these birds move upland and wait for the next low tide to resume feeding.



Least Sandpiper***Calidris minutilla***

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: August-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Time spent in this area is during the non-breeding season when their plumage is a light brownish gray. They have a slight decurved bill which is no longer than the length of the head.

Information: The smallest of the Sandpipers, this bird uses its bill to probe in the mud or shallow water for food. Their food consists of insects, crustaceans, worms, and small mollusks. This bird is common to the area.

**Long-billed Dowitcher*****Limnodromus solopaceus***

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: September-April, Common.

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Very similar to the Short-billed, other than its larger size and the bill is a bit longer.

Information: These birds are winter residents. Unlike the Short-billed Dowitcher, this bird likes more freshwater habitats so they do not compete for the same resource. They do, however, probe the soil in a similar fashion as the Short-billed for worms, snails, tiny crustaceans, and aquatic larvae.

Short-billed Dowitcher***Limnodromus griseus***

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: August-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: Audubon List Yellow

Description: Their winter plumage is a gray overall, with a pale eyebrow and white lower back and rump, and a distinct straight bill.

Information: They inhabit the tidal estuaries and salt marshes of this area, especially the Morro Bay Estuary, but have been seen at Sea West. They probe deeply with their long bills into the soil, with rapid up and down movements like a sewing machine, seeking marine worms, snails, tiny crustaceans, and aquatic larvae.

**Common Snipe*****Gallinago gallinago***

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: October-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This bird is strongly striped on the head and back with a whitish belly and a long bill. When in flight, this bird reveals a conspicuous orange tail.

Information: This bird is very difficult to see and will not move until it is almost stepped on. When they do finally flush, they scatter in a zig-zag pattern with surprising quickness.

They are common to wet and grassy meadows in which they feed primarily on insects, usually in the larvae stage, and small crustaceans.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: July-October; March-June

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: During the breeding season the female of this species has deep red band on the neck with a dark wash on the cheeks, and a mottled orange black coloration on the body. The male is exclusively flecked with white, gray, and brown. In the non-breeding season, almost all color disappears and the bird becomes white with a streaked gray back. There is a slight paint brush stroke on the eye as well.

Information: These birds follow plankton eating whales and on occasion they allow themselves to get picked up out of the water by these large mammals. On land these birds primarily feed on mosquito larvae and other aquatic insects that are found in freshwater ponds or lakes. These birds are uncommon to this area.



Laridae

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: November-May, Common

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small delicate gull with silvery gray above with conspicuous white, wedge-shaped patches on the leading edge of the outer wing. The head is black in breeding adults, white in winter, with a dark spot behind eye and a black bill.

Information: This bird is named after the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, Charles, who was a famous ornithologist in the mid 1800's in Europe. In the non-breeding season these birds winter here on the coast. These birds do not join the other gulls; rather, they keep to themselves feeding on garbage in tidal mud flats and river mouths.



Mew Gull *Larus canus*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: November-March, Common

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: These gulls are smaller than most gulls with a white and gray mantle, black wing tips, and greenish-yellow legs. The bill is smaller compared to those of larger gulls.

Information: These birds are winter residents and they inhabit the coastal zone. They scavenge for eggs, but also feed on insects that swarm in the air.



Ring-billed Gull

Larus delawarensis

Occurrence: Common; Uncommonly seen in breeding season.

Active Months: September-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Similar to Herring Gull but smaller, with greenish-yellow feet and narrow black ring around bill.

Information: These birds often breed here and always are winter residents. They commonly follow tractors after plowing or after a rainstorm to feed on worms.



California Gull

Larus californicus

Occurrence: Common; Uncommonly seen in breeding season.

Active Months: September-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Similar to Herring Gull but smaller, with a darker gray mantle, dark eye, reddish eye ring, and greenish legs. Bill of breeding adults has a red spot overlapped by black. Winter and immature birds have black sub-terminal bar on bill and lack a red eye ring of adults.

Information: These birds winter here on the coast before they move inland to breed. The California Gull attained fame when it arrived in great numbers at the Mormon colony near the Great Salt Lake and devoured a locust swarm that threatened the settler's first crop. A statue in Salt Lake City commemorates the event.



Glaucous-winged Gull

Larus glaucescens

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: November-March

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A large white gull with pearly gray mantle and wings. The gray wing feather shows a white "window" near tip of each feather. The bill is yellow with a red spot on lower mandible and pink feet. In winter, the red spot on bill becomes black and head and nape look dusky.

Information: This bird winters here until it is time to move north to breed. It is not common to see these birds away from the coast. They feed on garbage and are common to Morro Bay. They also feed on dead or dying fish, squid, and mollusks.



Heerman's Gull

Larus heermanni

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: July-October

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Predominately dark with red bill and a snow-white head which blends into gray on neck, back, and rump; slate-black wings and tail, with a white band on the end of the tail and wing feathers.



Information: The non-breeders of this species are found year round on beaches, especially here on the Central Coast. Their feeding habits include stealing fish from Brown Pelicans and egg scavenging.

Western Gull

Larus occidentalis

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Snow white, dark slate-colored back and wings. Yellow eye and bill; breeding adults have a red dot near tip of lower mandible. Pinkish or flesh colored feet.

Information: These birds are found here year round. These birds nest in colonies in offshore islands, jetties, and private residences. They build seaweed or grass nests to protect the nest during the season and may be re-used. 3 eggs per clutch; replacement clutch is possible. Semi-precocial and downy nestlings are grey and brown speckled. Young are tended by both parents, can fly after 6-7weeks, but are fed for about 12 weeks after hatching.



Caspian Tern

Sterna caspia

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: April-October

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC)

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The largest Tern, it is largely white with a black cap, slight crest, and a pale gray back and wings. The bill is a heavy bright red and the under wing is a dusky color.

Information: These birds have bred here on the beaches of the Morro Bay area, where they nest in solitary locations. Their nests are typically in a well made cup in a patch of dead grass. Terns can be quite predatory, consuming small birds and the eggs of other nesting Terns.



Elegant Tern

Sterna elegans

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: July-October

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC),

Federal Species of Concern (FSC)

State/Audubon Status: California State List 2/ Audubon List Red

Description: A large Tern with a long orange or yellow bill, white with gray mantle and wings. They also have a black cap ending in a shaggy crest; deeply forked tail.

Information: The nesting of this bird is mostly restricted to Isla Raza, a small flat island in the northern part of the Gulf of California, where it has several colonies of hundreds of nests. In the non-breeding season they migrate north and south for a time before returning back to the island for the next breeding season.



Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: August-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: It is a white bird with a pale gray back and wings, a black cap, and deeply forked tail. The bill is orange with a dark tip. Similar to the Common Tern, but the wing tips are frosty white, and the bill is more orange. In the winter, it lacks a black cap but has distinctive black mark behind the eye.

Information: One of the few exclusively North American terns, Forster's is so similar to the Common Tern that it was not recognized as a distinct species until 1831. Its preference for marshes enables it to avoid to competition with the Common Tern, which favors sandy or pebbly beaches and rocky islands.

Alcidae

Pigeon Guillemont *Cepphus columba*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

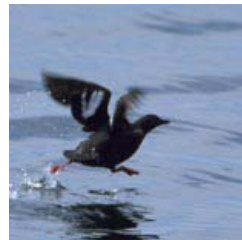
Active Months: February- October

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: These birds are common to this county during The breeding season. These rounded birds typically become all black, including the bill, with a large white patch on the coverts.

Information: These birds congregate on rocky shorelines or out at sea in small numbers. They primarily feed on fish that they have captured diving under the surface.



Common Murre *Uria aalge*

Occurrence: Seasonally common

Active Months: August-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: These birds are seen in this area during the non-breeding season. Non-breeding plumage consists of a brownish black back and a black cap.

The belly and neck is white and the bill is long, straight, and thin.

Information: These birds winter in this area usually staying out at see and can be seen congregating on land. They dive for food, primarily small fish and crustaceans, with extended wings.



Rhinoceros Auklet *Cerorhinca monocerata*

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: November-March

Federal Status: None



State/Audubon Status: None

Description: They are pelagic birds and can be seen off the coast in both near shore and open waters. They have small, stout yellowish bills, yellowish eyes, and white bellies. Their heads, backs, necks and wings are dark. While they are usually solitary while at sea, they are colonial island nesters, using burrows and crevices. During the breeding season, they have two white lines on the face and a white protrusion at the top of the bill.

Information: While Rhinoceros Auklets have not been documented nesting south of the Farallon Islands, they are seen foraging off of our coast in the winter.

Columbidae

Mourning Dove

Zenaida macroura

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A robust bodied bird with a slender neck and head. They are typically all light brown with an iridescent patch on the neck and black spots on the lower back. In flight and tail feathers exposed, they reveal a long tapered tail with white tips. They are often mistaken for owls with their “hoo, hoo” calls.



Information: A common bird found near anthropogenic areas, this bird inhabits almost any area. They primarily feed on seeds produced by weeds and crops and they typically roost in trees, hedgerows, and brush. After nesting these birds tend to roost in large numbers. Mourning Doves build flat platform nests of stick lined with softer materials. These sites are located at large variety of heights, ranging from the ground to 25 feet up in a tree. 2 eggs per clutch. Nestlings are altricial and downy and tended by both parents for about 27 days.

Strigidae

Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: October-March

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Typical owl features, has distinctive short ear tufts on the top of the head. It is mostly colored brown and orange streaking with the belly being lighter than the rest of the body. There are dark triangles that surround the eyes.

Information: They are less nocturnal than most other owls and roost during much of the day in concealed locations, usually hidden in a patch of tall forbs. These birds feed primarily on small mammals, in which, they hunt by flying low over fields during the early and late daylight hours.

Great Horned Owl

Bubo virginianus

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: These birds are very easily identified by their broad ear tufts on each side of the head. They also have a large head and dark striping patterns all over the body.

Information: These birds have been found to nest on the property. They typically nest in natural tree cavities or earthen caves. Usually 2-3 eggs per clutch. Young are altricial and downy and tended by both parents. The breeding season begins in late November to January. Their diet consists of medium-sized mammals, such as rabbits and skunks, which they hunt solo during the night. They roost during the day in trees or sheltered cliff ledges.



Tytonidae

Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This bird has a large white heart-shaped face surrounded by a dark orange border. The above portion of the body is fusion of orange and gray, while the underside is all white with slight hints of streaking on the wing. This bird is very distinctive.

Information: The Barn Owl is nocturnal and begins to emerge from its roost just as the sun disappears under the horizon. Their diet consists of small mammals and the occasionally insect. They nest in barns, caves, and trees in which they return to roost in the daylight hours. The nests are not made; rather, they are formed by shallow hollows in existing debris lined with owl pellets. 3-11 eggs per clutch. Young are altricial and downy with two down coats. While independent in 60 days they are tended by both parents for the first two months after hatching. The breeding season begins in January to late February, with the female incubates while the male hunts for food.

Caprimulgidae

Common Poorwill

Phalaenoptilus nuttallii

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Year round

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This species has cryptic coloration consisting of many color patterns. They are small, and they have a short tail and relatively short rounded wings. The bill is very small and thin.

Information: This species roosts on the ground during the day in dry gravel or in scattered bushes, and they only become active at night. At night, they primarily hunt for insects by sitting on the ground only flying to catch its prey. It is the smallest of all the birds in the “nightjar” family.

Apodidae

White-throated Swift

Aeronautes saxatalis

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Year round

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Very similar to swallows, however, their wings are longer than the body in which they appear to have a bend in them. This species is mostly black with white patches on the side of the body and a white throat and secondary wing tips.

Information: This bird eats primarily insects, mostly the aerial type. They tend to congregate where there is a large abundance of food items.

Trochilidae

Anna’s Hummingbird

Calypte anna

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small long billed bird; the male Anna’s have a distinctive magenta colored gorget on the neck on an otherwise all green body. Females of this species are a dingy green color a small red central patch.

Information: One of the most common hummingbird found in the county as well as Sea West. Like most hummingbird species, these birds hover while they forage on the nectar of flowering plants. They extend their long tongue and probe the nectary spurs taking several licks every second. The male breeding behavior of this species is a good identification indicator: the male makes a call, flies up in the air, and then dives down making a “J” shape and is repeated in the same path. This and most others species of hummingbirds do not form pair bonds, the male’s only mate with the females that feed in their area. The male spends most of its time warding off intruders by flashing their bright gorget. The nests of this species consist of a well made cup made from sticks and spider webs lined with lichen and feathers. These nests can be placed in a wide variety of sites as long as their nest can be supported. Usually 2 eggs per clutch. Nestlings are altricial and leave nest after 26 days.



Allen’s Hummingbird

Selasphorus sasin

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: December-August

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC), Federal Species of Concern (FSC)

State/Audubon Status: Audubon List Yellow

Description: Similar in size and shape to the Anna's; has orange color on the belly and tail. The outer tail feathers are rather narrow, and the male of this species has a red gorget on the neck. The female is similar to the Anna's but has more orange on the belly and back.

Information: Breeding displays is similar to the Anna's, however, the end "J" pattern becomes a series of back and forth motions before returning high in the air. These birds also feed on the nectar of flowering plants while hovering. This species is often confused with the Rufous Hummingbird and the amount of orange on the back is a distinction between the two.

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: February-April; July-October

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC),

Federal Species of Concern (FSC)

State/Audubon Status: Audubon List Yellow

Description: Similar in size and shape to the Anna's and Allen's; is mostly orange with green patches on the coverts on the upper wing.

Information: Breeding display is a series J-shapes similar to the Anna's, except that the dives become a series where the origin is always a different path. Feeding patterns and behavior are similar to the Anna's and Allen's species.



Alcedinidae

Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon*

Occurrence: Uncommon, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A pigeon-sized bird, it is blue-gray above with white below, with a bushy crest and a distinctive dagger-like bill. Males have a blue-gray breast band; the female is similar, but has a chestnut belly band.

Information: These birds can be found year round foraging for fish in Morro Bay. Their nesting behavior consists of tunneling in the sides of cliffs and banks and depositing their eggs unprotected on the tunnel floor. 6-8 white eggs per clutch. Nestlings are altricial and naked and tended by both parents for 30-35 days after hatching. These birds can also be seen foraging in lakes and rivers as well. They take to flight in circling route to catch fish then return to their perch.



Picidae

Acorn Woodpecker *Melanerpes formicivorus*

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Medium size, less than 2 foot wing span. Mostly black with a white rump, belly and a distinctive red cap.

Information: Historical records of the Los Osos Oaks Reserve indicate this species was once abundant. However, in 2005, only one was recorded and documented. This highly gregarious species is typically seen in groups up to 16 individuals. They require acorns and store them in trees. Nesting sites are usually old snags or poles.

Downy Woodpecker

Picoides pubescens

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small black and white woodpecker with a white back. The wings have white bars on them and the tail has light edges with two dark bands. They have large thick white supercilium and malar stripes. They have a very short bill for a woodpecker. The males have a small red hind crown.



Information: Found near or in woods and forages along small twigs or weed stalks. Usually nests in cavities in dead wood.

Nuttall's Woodpecker

Picoides nuttallii

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A white breasted woodpecker with a black back that has white bars. The bars on the back do not extend up the entire back. There is a white moustache stripe right above the bill. The male has a red hind crown.

Information: Mostly found in oak woodlands. Has been known to hybridize with Downy and Ladder-Backed woodpeckers. Breeds in live oaks and mixed tree growth forests near water courses.

Northern Flicker

Colaptes auratus

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A large brown woodpecker with black bars along the back and wings and black spots on the breast and belly. Throat has a large black spot. Rump is white that changes to black and white bars on the tail. Head is grey with a brown crown and a brown malar stripe in females and a red malar stripe in males. The underneath of the wings is a reddish color.

Information: These are large distinctive woodpeckers often seen on the ground feeding on ants. Their cryptic coloring makes them very hard to see until they take off and expose the bright coloring on the undersides of the wings. Breeds in areas with scattered trees, usually with the cavity in a living tree.

Tyrannidae

Pacific-slope Flycatcher *Epidonax difficilis*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: March-December

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A green brown bird with a paler belly and white eye ring. Wings are darker brown black with two white bands. Lower mandible is yellow and head has a slight crest.

Information: Most *Epidonax* flycatchers are difficult to tell apart from each other. The male makes a *psee-weet* noise, like hailing a taxi. They are often found in shaded forest areas along streams.



Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: April-October

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A dusky brown grey bird with rufous markings on its tail and wings. Belly is yellow and throat and breast are whitish. Wings have white edges on the secondaries. Head has a slight crest.

Information: This bird is found in more open, arid habitats. They nest in cavities and will lean forward and bob their heads when agitated.

Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans*

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A black bird with a white belly. The head is a darker solid black with a very slight crest. Tail is black with white edges.

Information: When perched this bird will wag its tail up and down, flicking it rapidly, exposing the white edges. Found most commonly in open areas near water. They generally choose low conspicuous perches. The female makes a nest of mud pellets, dried grass and hair in a cup shape that is lined with feather, wool, and hair. Breeding begins mid march and 4 to 5 eggs are laid. Incubation lasts 15 to 18 days and the young leave the nest at 21 days. The males may feed the fledged young while the female re-nests.



Say's Phoebe

Sayornis saya

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A pale grey bird with a whitish throat and breast and a rufous belly. Tail is solid black. Juveniles have a rufous hue cast over the grey upper body and a yellow lower mandible.

Information: When perched this bird will wag its tail up and down, flicking it rapidly. Breeds in open, semi arid habitats and does not usually use mud in building the nests.



Cassin's Kingbird

Tyrannus vociferans

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: March-October

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A yellow breasted kingbird with a pale grey green back and grey head with a white malar stripe. Tail is blackish with a pale tip and wing coverts are pale edged.

Information: This bird is found in a variety of habitats but prefers areas with scattered trees. Can be identified by its call, a CHI-Vrrrr sound.

Western Kingbird

Tyrannus verticalis

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A yellow breasted kingbird with a pale grey back and whitish throat and belly. Tail is black with white edges and it has dark wing coverts.

Information: This bird tends to coast to a landing and has a robin like flight pattern. Breeds in open areas in trees by water. The nest is a large untidy cup of weed stems, twigs, plant fibers, and most anything the bird can find. The inside of the nest is lined with similar substances felted together tightly. Breeding season begins mid April to late May. Usually 4 eggs are laid but can be 3 to 5. Young leave the nest at 13 to 14 days and fly at 16 to 17 days.

Laniidae

Logger-head Shrike

Lanius ludovicianus

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC),

Federal Species of Concern (FSC)

State/Audubon Status: None



Description: A large, aggressive blue-grey bird with black markings. Tail is black with white edges and wings are black with a single white bar. The head has a black mask and white throat. Juveniles have a brown wash to them and a faintly barred breast.

Information: A very aggressive bird that has been known to attack prey much larger than itself. They will also impale prey ranging from small insects to small rodents on thorns or barbed wire fences for later consumption.

Vireonidae

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: March-October

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small stocky vireo that is mostly grey in color with a yellow to white belly. Large pale lores contrast with a darker crown.

Information: The pale lores give this bird a blank faced look. They are found mainly in broad leaf trees, especially near water. It is usually a solitary bird. Similar to the Philadelphia vireo, but with pale lores.

Hutton's Vireo *Vireo huttoni*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small stocky active bird with white bars on its wings. It is mostly a drab olive color with a lighter belly and bluish legs. It has pale lores and a dark lower mandible.

Information: This bird is often found in oak woodlands moving through the trees with flocks of other small birds. Similar to the Ruby crowned kinglet but is heavier with a thicker hooked bill and thicker legs with no dark bar across the base of the secondaries.

Corvidae

Western Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma californica*

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A slender long tailed jay with blue wings and tail. The adults have a blue head with a distinct blue breast band and a white supercilium line.

Information: This jay usually forages along on the ground in dense brushy areas among oaks or other trees. These birds are generally bold and conspicuous. Nests in trees or shrubs beginning in early April. Nest is a cup twigs mixed with moss, weed stems and



grasses. Usually 2 to 3 eggs are laid and incubation last 15 to 17 days. Young are tended by both parents and leave the nest at about 18 days.

American Crow

Corvus brachyrhincos

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A solid black large corvid with broad wings and a short tail. Some individuals can have irregular white markings on the wings. Juveniles may have a brownish hue on the wings.

Information: More common farther inland, these birds are often seen in small groups foraging on the ground. They adjust well to human habitation and are found in most urban areas. Breeding season begins in late January. The nest is a large cup of sticks and coarse stems lined with grasses, fur, hair, and moss. Usually 4 to 5 eggs are laid and incubated 18 days by the female. Young of previous years may assist in caring for young. Nestlings feather in 20 to 30 days and leave nest at about 35 days.



Hirundinidae

Northern Rough-winged Swallow

Stelgidopteryx serripennis

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: March-August

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A broad-winged and short-tailed swallow. Pale brown above, white below with dingy brown throat.

Information: This is a seasonally uncommon swallow that forages for insects in the air over ponds and rivers.

Violet-green Swallow

Tachycyneta thalassina

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: March-August

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Dark metallic bronze-green upperparts, iridescent violet rump and tail, the latter slightly forked; white underparts. White cheeks extending above eye, and white on the sides above rump distinguish it from the Tree Swallow.

Information: This swallow lives in small colonies and forages over open areas, usually near water.

Tree Swallow

Tachycyneta thalassina

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: March-August

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Metallic blue-black above; underparts are white. Juveniles are gray-brown above, sometimes with indistinct dusky partial breast band. This swallow is relatively broad-winged, with a notched tail.

Information: Often seen in large flocks, perching on wires, or in bushes and reeds. Forages over fields or water for berries and insects.

Cliff Swallow

Petrochelidon pyrrhonota

Occurrence: Seasonally common, nesting

Active Months: March-September

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A colorful bird with light forehead; blue-black crown and back with white stripes on back. Rust-colored rump, dark wings and tail. Chestnut throat and cheek, buffy collar and whitish belly. The tail is slightly notched, not forked, and often appears squarish.

Information: Forages over fields and ponds. The Cliff Swallow nests mostly on man-made structures such as under bridges or house eaves; also under overhanging ledges on rocky cliffs. The nest is a gourd-shaped mud cone with small entrance hole; built in tightly packed clusters in large colonies. Clutches consist of 2-5 whitish eggs spotted with brown. Nestlings are altricial; born naked with eyes closed and they fledge within 21-24 days.

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon, nesting

Active Months: March-September

Federal Status: Federal Species of Concern (FSC)

State/Audubon Status: California State List 3

Description: Blue-black above, light cinnamon-rust below, with richer chestnut-red throat and forehead. Adults have a very long, deeply forked tail with white spots underneath. Juveniles have rust-colored throat and buffy underparts, shorter tail, with a less graceful flight.

Information: Forages in the air for insects; will occasionally eat berries. Nest is a partial bowl of mud and is usually constructed on man-made structures. Will also nest on cliff ledges. Clutches consist of 4-5 white eggs with brown spots. Nestlings are born altricial and fledge within 18-23 days.



Paridae

Oak Titmouse

Baeolophus inornatus

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: Federal Species of Concern

State/Audubon Status: None/Audubon's List Yellow

Description: A small and plainly colored gray bird, with a slight crest. The bill is very short as is the head. A very distinct bird overall due to its small stature and commonly being found in an oak forest.

Information: Most commonly seen here in the west in open or closed oak woodlands feeding seeds and insects. The sighting of this species could be just be coincidental passage through the property due to the lack of dense canopy.

Chestnut-backed Chickadee *Poecile rufescens*

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small (4½-5") drab bird with strong legs and a short, strong bill. Dusky, black-capped and black-bibbed with chestnut flanks and back.

Information: Chickadees are found in small flocks and are fairly social and inquisitive. They glean invertebrates and/or fruit from foliage and occasionally from branches.

Aegithalidae

Bushtit *Psaltriparus minimus*

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A tiny, distinctive, gray bird with light underparts, a brown crown, pale ear patches, a small bill, and a relatively long tail.

Information: Bushtits flock in small bands (except when breeding) and flit nervously through trees and bushes while gleaning for insects, seeds and fruit. Nests are gourd-shaped, hanging pockets made of moss, leaves, grass and lichens woven around twigs and secured by spider webs. Clutches are typically 5-7 white, unmarked eggs and the altricial nestlings fledge within 14-15 days.

Timaliidae

Wrentit *Chamaea fasciata*

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Sparrow-sized bird with uniformly streaked breast and conspicuous white eyes. Its name is apt, for its head, beak, and eyes resemble those of a tit, whereas the long, cocked tail and secretive habits remind one of a wren.

Information: The Wrentit spends all its adult life within the territory chosen in its first year. The "bouncing ping pong ball" song is heard much more often than the bird is seen. Its diet consists of insects which it gleans off foliage and bark.

Sylviidae

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Polioptila caerulea

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small, slender bird that is bluish-gray above and white below. Its long, black tail with white outer tail feathers is cocked like a wren's. Male's crown and forehead is bordered with black. Female is less bluish and lacks black markings on head.

Information: This gnatcatcher typically inhabits chaparral, deciduous woodlands, and streamside thickets. They are lively birds that conspicuously flick their long tails while gathering insects from the branches of trees and shrubs.

Troglodytidae

Bewick's Wren

Thryomanes bewickii

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Plain, unpatterned warm brown above, white or grayish-white below, with distinct light white eyebrow stripe. When tail is fanned, white outer tips of tail feathers are conspicuous, as is its unique slow flicking of tail sideways.

Information: Bewick's Wren uses its long, narrow, slightly downcurved bill for scavenging on the ground and picking in crevices for insects and spiders.

House Wren

Troglodytes aedon

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Gray-brown wren with faint eye stripe, light crossbarring on otherwise plain back. This bird has a long, slightly curved bill and short tail, which it frequently cocks.

Information: This wren gleans insects and spiders from vegetation and from the ground. It is fairly secretive, but its loud, bubbling song is conspicuous in summer.

Rock Wren

Salpinctes obsoletus

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This wren is finely mottled gray above with a rust-colored rump. It has a light eye stripe and fine streaking on its pale breast. The tips of the outer tail feathers are buffy.

Information: The Rock Wren prefers rocky habitats. It gleans insects and spiders from the ground and shrubs. It often stands on top of a rock and bounces (as if doing deep knee bends) while giving ringing call.

Turdidae

Western Bluebird *Sialia cyrruoides*

Occurrence: Seasonally common

Active Months:

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This sparrow-sized bird is long-winged and relatively short-tailed. Adult males have a deep blue hood and upperparts, a white belly, a rusty red breast and a crescent mark across upper back. Adult females are sooty gray above, with dull blue wings and tail. Juveniles are similar to females, but grayer, with speckled underparts.

Information: This rather small and stocky thrush of open country is usually found in small groups of up to 10 that roam from one area to another in search of food. It feeds on insects and fruit gleaned from the ground or vegetation.



American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months:

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A large thrush, this bird has gray-brown upperparts, a red or orange breast, a white throat, and a blackish head and tail. Females are paler in color, and juveniles are more slender with brown spots below and a spotted breast washed with orange.

Information: This bird is perhaps the best known of all North American birds. Nests are cup-like and made of roots and small twigs, reinforced with mud and lined with fine material. Females lay 3 or 4 blue, unmarked eggs and fledglings leave the nest in approximately 14-16 days. In the winter, these birds gather in large foraging flocks and communal roosts that may number in the hundreds or even thousands. Their diet consists of mainly earthworms and berries.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Olive-brown above with contrasting rufous tail, white streaked throat, blackish-brown spots on breast, complete white eye ring and whitish underparts.

Information: This is the only thrush normally seen in North America in winter. These thrushes spend most of their time in dense cover, foraging on the ground and in vegetation for insects and/or fruit. Its habit of flipping its wings helps differentiate it from other thrushes.

Mimidae

Northern Mockingbird

Mimus polyglottos

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A robin-sized bird. Gray above, white below, with white wing bars and a nervous motion of the tail. In flight, tail is black with striking white borders and white wing flashes.

Information: This common and conspicuous bird feeds on insects and fruit and often defends fruiting trees and shrubs from other birds. “Wing-flashing”, the sudden opening and closing of wings, is performed perhaps to stir up insects and to distract predators.



California Thrasher

Toxostoma redivivium

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Large thrasher with long, deeply curved bill. Dark brown above with lighter gray-brown breast and cinnamon belly and undertail coverts.

Information: This bird is difficult to see in chaparral and other dense brush, but its loud repetitious call is often heard. It feeds on the ground under the shelter of bushes and uses its heavy, curved bill to hoe the soil and turn over leaf litter in search of insects, fruit, and nuts.



Motacillidae

American Pipit

Anthus rubescens

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: October-March

Description: There are many different color variations of this species. Similar in morphology to the thrushes, this species has faint streaks on its back and stomach. Occasionally the streaking on the stomach is much more pronounced and easily seen. The back is darker than the stomach, yet both are rather drab overall. They have a white supercilium line and neck.

Information: Mostly found where there is open ground and often in flocks. When it is standing they bob their tail which is a signature characteristic of this species. This species typically feed on insects and small seeds.

Bombycillidae

Cedar Waxwing

Bombycilla cedrorum

Occurrence: Seasonally common

Active Months: September-June

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: Trim, crested, grayish-brown bird with black mask and chin, yellow belly, white undertail coverts and a yellow terminal band. Juveniles have indistinct gray-streaked breast.

Information: The Cedar Waxwing is common but irregular habitats where fruit or other food (tree buds, flowers and insects) is found. They almost always occur in small or large flocks, except when nesting.

Sturnidae

European Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A chunky bird with a short tail, this bird is black with iridescent green-purple gloss and yellow bill in spring. In winter, it is duller and heavily speckled with light spots and a dark bill.

Information: The European Starling was introduced from Europe to New York in the late 1800's and is now found throughout North America. They compete with native hole-nesters for woodpecker holes and natural cavities.

Parulidae

Common Yellowthroat

Geothlypis trichas

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small brown bird with a bright yellow throat, breast, and undertail coverts. Males have a black face with a white line bordering it. Females have no black or white on the head, while juveniles may lack yellow throat and breast altogether.

Information: An inconspicuous resident of marshy areas breeding in low undergrowth by the waters edge. Breeding begins in late April and usually 4 eggs are laid. Incubation is by the female and lasts 12 days with the young leaving the nest at 9 to 10 days.

Orange-crowned Warbler

Vermivora celata

Occurrence: Uncommon, seasonally common

Active Months: Residents

Description: A typical warbler, mostly yellow with a distinctive orange patch on the head which is rarely seen in the field. It has a dark eye-line and a broken eye-ring. Drab grey primary and secondary wing feathers, a streaky chest and yellow under-tail coverts.

Information: Likes weedy habitats and edges of low trees. Song is a fast trill of flat notes. Nest are usually well hidden on the ground, in low shrubs and vines and lined with coarse grasses, bark and fine materials.

Yellow Warbler

Dendroica petechia

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: April-September

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: California State List 3

Description: A mostly yellow bird with a dull back and wings.

Tail has bright yellow markings that are very conspicuous. The male has red streaks on his breast.

Information: Found in low trees and woodland edges, especially in areas with willows. The short tail with yellow spots is distinctive of this species.



Yellow-rumped Warbler

Dendroica coronata

Occurrence: Seasonally common

Active Months: September-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A grey bird with a yellow rump, throat, and side patches under the wings. The wings and tail are grey with extended white coverts. Male has a yellow crown and distinct black breast. The entire body has streaky black markings except for head and belly.

Information: Found in open woods and bushy areas. This species often perches upright on prominent twigs with its yellow rump exposed. It will flit out to catch insects and then return to the same roost.

Townsend's Warbler

Dendroica townsendii

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: September-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small bird with a green back and grey wings and tail. The tail has white edges and the wings have two white bars. The face is yellow with an olive cheek. The breast is streaky yellow and olive that fades to white. Male has black crown, cheek and breast.

Information: More common in mature coniferous forests, this bird nests and forages high in the trees. Song is a rapid series of buzzy notes.



Common Yellowthroat

Geothlypis trichas

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC)

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small brown bird with a bright yellow throat, breast, and undertail coverts. Male has a black face mask with a white line behind the mask. Female has no black or white on the head. Juveniles may lack yellow throat and breast.

Information: An inconspicuous resident of marshy areas that breeds in low undergrowth by the waters edge. Breeding begins in late April and usually 4 eggs are laid. Incubation is by the female and lasts 12 days. Young leave the nest at 9 to 10 days.

Wilson's Warbler

Wilsonia pusilla

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: February-October

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small yellow bellied bird with a green grey back and plain dark wings and tail. Male has a black crown. Very small and small billed with a large distinctive dark eye.

Information: A small active species usually found in dense brushy vegetation. Frequently found near water, especially in willow thickets. Its size and bright yellow plumage with drab wings and tail are very distinctive.



Thraupidae

Western Tanager

Piranga ludoviciana

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

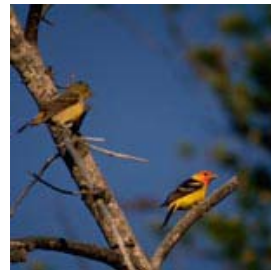
Active Months: August-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This is a small and relatively short-tailed, with a small, orange bill and long, pointed wings. The female of this species is generally yellow in color with a dusky back that contrasts with the yellow nape and rump. On the wings there is an obvious pale marking on the wingbars. In comparison, the male of this species is a resilient yellow with a blackish back and when breeding has an orange head.

Information: Usually solitary. Feeds on insects and larvae gleaned from trees. Females may be confused with Scarlet Tanager.



Cardinalidae

Black-headed Grosbeak

Pheucticus melanocephalus

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: March-October

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A stocky bird with a large head and very large bill. The breast usually finely streaked and the underwing coverts always are pale or lemon yellow. The female of this species has a buffy nape and supercilium and fine, slight streaks on the center of the buffy breasts. Also, the bill is bicolored-upper mandible is gray and lower mandible is pink. In breeding season, the female's breast may become whitish or the fine streaks may disappear. The male of this species is overall more colorful. The breast, nape and rump of the male is orange- rufous.

Information: Found, Usually solitary, in wooded or brushy habitat, especially during migration. Feeds on insects, fruits and seeds. Females are very similar to Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Blue Grosbeak

Guriaca caerulea

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon, nesting

Active Months: April-August

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A relatively, large-headed with a heavy bill, long, rounded tail and rufous wing bars. The male of this species is bright blue overall with rufous wing bars; however, the female has a uniform reddish brown color with rufous wing bars.

Information: Found in open weedy fields with brushy patches. Often found in small groups of two to five. Forages for seeds and insects low in weeds

Lazuli Bunting

Passerina amoena

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: April-October

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This rather stocky, short-tailed and small-billed bird is similar to the Indigo Bunting in structure. The female of this species has a grayish throat, buffy wingbars, unstreaked warm buffy breast and slightly paler and grayer rump. However, when breeding the female develops a drab grayish-brown back and very narrow whitish wingbars. The male of this species is sparkly blue on the head, nape, rump, and wing with rufous-orange breast than fades to white.

Information: Found in brushy or weedy habitat.



Emberizidae

Spotted Towhee

Pipilo maculatus

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The Spotted Towhee is a stocky, long-tailed bird with a dark head that appears slightly crested and a red eye. It has distinct rufous flanks. The male of this species has an overall dark appearance with very limited white markings on the wing bars and the flanks are very dark. The female is dark brown and limited white spotting on the wing bars.

Information: Found, usually solitary, in brushy habitat. Forages on the ground by scratching leaf litter for seeds and insects. Nests are cup-like and made of grasses, bark, rootlets, and leaf litter and are built by the females. 3-4 grayish eggs per clutch. Nestlings are altricial and downy and tended by females. Leave nest by 9 days after hatching.

California Towhee *Pipilo crissalis*

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The California Towhee is rather sluggish and stocky bird with a drab coloration. It is gray-brown overall with cinnamon lore and faint cinnamon streaks on the breast. The belly is generally dusky.

Information: Found, usually solitary or in pairs, in relatively open areas near patches of brush. Feeds on seeds, fruit, and insects



Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: April-November

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A small sparrow with a long, thin tail. First

winter birds will have dark lores and a weak ‘mustache’ with relatively drab gray-brown on the belly and a grayish rump. Adult nonbreeding birds will have brighter colors than the first winter birds, however, the adult breeding birds will have resilient coloration on the body and wings, the crown is rufous and eye-line is dark. The breast and belly region consists of an unstreaked whitish color.

Information: Nests in grassy areas near woodlands. Winters in open shortgrass areas with scattered trees or brush. Typically in small flocks.



Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*

Occurrence: Uncommon; seasonally common, nesting

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This bird is neat and cleanly marked with a small

bill and slight crest, pointed wings and a short, notched tail. On the crown, there is a whitish median crown-stripe and fine brown streaks on white breasts that extends to a white belly



Information: Found in open grassy or weedy habitats, including marshes, fields and dunes; less numerous in brushy habitat. Often forms small loose flocks in the winter. Nests are scratched out of the soil by birds. The nest rim is level with the ground, and nest is lined with hair, grasses and sedges. 3-6 eggs per clutch and 1-2 clutches per year. Young are altricial and downy and tended by both parents.

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

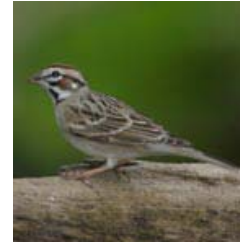
Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A long-necked and long-tailed sparrow with a striking head pattern that is best described as a bold harlequin face pattern of rufous, white, and black. Its underparts are white with a dark spot on the breast.

Information: Found in open grassy areas with scattered trees or short grass adjacent to hedgerows and trees. Often forms flocks in winter



Golden-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia atricapilla*

Occurrence: Common, seasonally common

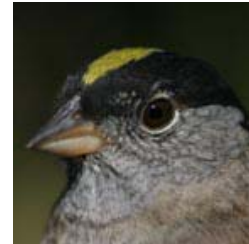
Active Months: October to April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: One of the largest of the sparrows. Adult birds have extensive black on the head and a yellow fore-crown. The bill is bicolor and the breast is gray with some brown-rufous streaks. Immature birds are similar to White-Crowned Sparrow, but are grayer overall with a pale, drab throat.

Information: Nests in dense brush. Winters in any weedy or brushy areas, often in flocks with White-crowned Sparrow.



White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: October-April

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: A relatively large, long-tailed, long-necked sparrow. Adult birds are distinct with an extensive white on the head. The immature birds are gray and brown overall, with pinkish-orange bill and brown crown-stripes.

Information: Found in large flocks in brushy and weedy habitats. Nests in patchy brushy areas.



Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This is a fairly long-tailed bird with a round head and stout, gray bill. The front of the body is coarsely streaked with bold brown lateral throat stripe and central breast spot. Overall, this bird is dark and contrasting.

Information: Found, usually solitary, in brushy areas near water. Nests on the ground or in shrubs and trees, usually in a twig fork. Nest is cup-shaped and made of weeds, grasses, bark stripes and lined with finer materials. 3-5 finely speckled eggs per clutch. Young are altricial and downy and tended by both parents. Young leave the nest after 10 days.

Lincoln Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: September-May

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The Lincoln's Sparrow has a small, pointed bill and crisp streaking overall. They are rather pale gray overall with a buffy malar and finely streaked throat and breast. The crown is peaked and has a broad, gray supercilium. The breast is covered with blackish streaks.

Information: Found in grassy, weedy, and brushy areas, often near water.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*

Occurrence: Common

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The Dark-eyed Junco is relatively the smallest junco. It has a dark, dull-gray hood that contrasts sharply with brown and back flanks. It has a short, conic and pointed bill. However, the female of this species is less showy with a dark ashy gray hood and a reddish back and pinkish-brown flanks.

Information: Found in patches of open ground and brush near woodlands. Winter in small flocks in patchy wooded areas. Forage on open ground, flying into brush or trees when alarmed.

Icteridae

Western meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta*

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The Western Meadowlark has a heavy body type with a short tail and a long bill. The tail has an obvious white outer tail feathers. This bird has a very cryptic coloration on its back; however, the male of this species is showier than the female. The male has a yellow belly and yellow malar that is separated by a dark brown V on the

breast. Its head has a contrasting brown and white stripe pattern. The female has a low-contrast head pattern and is overall pale gray-brown.

Information: This bird is found in open, grassy habitats, often perching on fences or bushes in small or loose flocks. In flight, its flight is weak and fluttery. Winters in loose flocks. Feeds on seeds, insects and worms. Nests in grasslands; a dommed structure built by females. 3-7 eggs per clutch. Nestlings altricial and downy and tended by both parents.

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Resident

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This bird has a stout bill, short tail and pointed wings. The male of this species has a black body with an appearance of slight glossy green. Its head is dark brown. On the contrary, the female of this species has a more drab coloration. It has a scaly back and all the feathers are fringed in a pale brown. Its breast has fine and distinct streaks.

Information: Found in woods, edges, and open fields. Usually found in small flocks and often with blackbirds. Forages for seeds and invertebrates on open ground. A brood parasite, the females can lay up to 30 eggs in a breeding season, in other birds' nests. Young are altricial and downy but develop very quickly, out competing other young in the host nest. Young leave nest at 10 days.

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*

Occurrence: Seasonally uncommon

Active Months: April-May; August-October

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The Yellow-headed Blackbird is a large bodied bird with broad wings and relatively short tail. The male of this species has an overall black body with a yellow head and white primary coverts. The female of this species has a uniform dark brown body with a yellow breast and throat. There is some yellow coloration above the eye that extends down to the bill.

Information: Nests and roosts in marshes. Forages for seeds and invertebrates in open habitats such as fields and pastures, often in flocks or mixed with other blackbirds.

Tri-colored Blackbird *Agelaius tricolor*

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC), Federal Species of Concern (FSC)

State/Audubon Status: Audubon List Yellow

Description: The Tri-colored Blackbird looks very similar to the Red-winged Blackbirds. Their wingtips are distinctly more pointed. In comparison to the Red-Winged Blackbird, the bill is much thinner. The male of this species has a glossy black body with dark red

lesser coverts and white median coverts. The female of this species have cold gray tones overall with whitish-gray throat.

Information: Nests in colonies in reedy marshes and on farmland, often mixed with Red-winged Blackbirds. Forages for seeds and invertebrates in open fields, often in a very large flock.

Red-winged Blackbird

Agelaius phoeniceus



Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The Red-winged Blackbird is a rather stocky bird with a short tail. Its bill is moderately thick. The male of this species is an all black bird with an orange to red lesser coverts and pale yellowish median coverts. The female of this species has obvious rufous streaks overall. The bill is thicker and the throat is often washed with pinkish white.

Information: Nests and roosts in wet, marshy or brushy habitats. Nest is a deep cup-like structure made of tightly woven leaves and stems, and usually in shrubs. 3-5 eggs per clutch. Nestlings are altricial and downy and tended by both parents. Typically leave nest after 28 days. Almost any small weedy ditch or wet hayfield harbors a breeding pair. Forages for seeds and invertebrates in open fields, often in a very large flock. Females may be mistaken as sparrows

Brewer's Blackbird

Euphagus cyanocephalus



Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The Brewer's Blackbird is a slender and long-tailed bird. Its bill is short, straight and pointed. In flight, it is less undulating than other blackbirds. The male of this species is dark black overall with a pale eye. When in breeding season, the male birds have more of an iridescent look to the black feather and have a glossy appearance. However, the female of this species is a drab gray-brown and unmarked overall with a dark eye.

Information: Found in flocks. Forages for seeds and insects on open ground. Nests in a variety of habitats. Nest are made of fine twigs, grasses, mud, dung and lined with fine materials. 5-6 pale eggs per clutch. Nestlings are altricial and downy, tended by both parents and independent by 26 days after hatching.

Fringillidae

Purple Finch

Carpodacus purpureus

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The Purple Finch is a stocky bird with a short tail, medium-length wings and stout bill. The male of this species has a reddish head and breast. Outlining the red breast, there is some dingy brown coloration. The female of this species is very streaky in appearance. The head and back of the female is brown and the breast is blurry streaks. Both sexes of this bird has grayish bill and grayish legs.

Information: Typically, it breeds in open coniferous-deciduous forest, forest edge, and open woodland, but nests in the cypress trees. Nests are found in trees on eastern horizontal branches far from the trunk. 3-6 pale blue and speckled eggs per clutch. Nestlings are altricial and downy, tended by both parents and independent by 14 days.

House Finch

Carpodacus mexicanus

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The House Finch is a smaller bodied bird with a long, notched tail. Its wings are short and round. It has a round head and short bill. The male of this species has an orange to red coloration from the forehead to the malar. There is pale grayish auriculars and brownish indistinct streaks on the primary coverts. There are brownish white streaks on the flank. The female of this species is a drab, blurry version of the male. It is gray to brown overall with indistinct streaks. The head is very plain and has blurry, grayish streaks on its flanks.

Information: Found in patchy, brushy and wooded areas. Nearly always in small flocks, flying above treetops and swooping down to land on the tops of bushes or weeds. A regular visitor to bird feeders and often nests on or near buildings. Feeds on seeds, fruit and some insects. Nests in a variety of habitats. Nest is built by female in two days and is made of fine grasses, leaves, string, feathers, and twigs. 3-6 very pale blue eggs per clutch. Nestlings are altricial and downy, tended by both parents, but brooded by female. Young leave the nest around 16 days after hatching.

Lawrence's Goldfinch

Carduelis lawerenci

Occurrence: Uncommon

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC), Federal Species of Concern (FSC)

State/Audubon Status: Audubon List Red

Description: The Lawrence's Goldfinch is a medium sized goldfinch with a small, stubby bill and fairly long tail. In flight, there are white underwing coverts, a white band across the underside of the tail feathers and a yellow rump. The male of this species has a gray body with a black face and a yellow breast. The wings have a yellow and gray contrast on the wing bars and the primary feathers are yellow. However, the female of this species has a brownish-gray back with a dusky face. The wing bars are slightly less colorful and there is only a hint of yellow on the edges of the primary feathers.

Information: Nearly always seen in small flocks on weed seeds, sometimes mixed with other goldfinches

Lesser Goldfinch

Carduelis psaltria

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: This bird is the smallest goldfinch. It is tiny, stocky and short-tailed with short, rounded wings and large bill. The bill is stout and dark gray. The male of this species is generally yellow in appearance with black cap and black wings. In flight, the underwing is black with an obvious white patch. The tail also has large white patches present. The female of this species is not as yellow as the male. In flight, the female is all dark on the upper side and has little to no white on the tail. The back of the female will range from olive to green.

Information: Open habitats with scattered trees or brush, and fields. They typically nest in solitary pairs, though they sometimes nest in small colonies. Nests are made of compactly woven of plant fibers, grass stems, bark, and moss. 3-6 pale greenish-blue eggs per clutch. Nestlings are altricial and downy, tended by both parents and leave the nest by 11 days.



American Goldfinch

Carduelis tristis

Occurrence: Common, nesting

Active Months: Residents

Federal Status: None

State/Audubon Status: None

Description: The American Goldfinch is the largest finch in the United States, however, it is still a small bird. The male of this species is yellow with black forehead and tail. Most of this bird's wings are black with yellow lesser coverts. The underwing coverts and rump are white. The bill is a conic and stout in shape and pink in color. The female of this species is similar to the male except for being drab in coloration.

Information: Breeding occurs over a variety of habitats with openings and where trees and shrubs are present. Nests have been found in trees, shrubs or in tall weeds. They are constructed as cups from tiny plant fibers and are placed on twigs or in a fork in trees or shrubs. Nestlings are altricial and downy, tended by both parents but brooded by the female. Young leave the nest in about 17 days.

