

# FIELD GUIDE

*to*

# BOISE'S BIRDS



Parks &  
Recreation

# FIELD GUIDE

*to*

# BOISE'S BIRDS

Published by Boise Parks & Recreation  
with special thanks to  
Golden Eagle Audubon Society,  
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies,  
and Point Blue Conservation Science

## Acknowledgments

We offer our thanks to the people and organizations who shared their time, talent and expertise to make this guide possible:

- **Terry Rich:** Golden Eagle Audubon Society, American Birding Association
- **RL Rowland:** Golden Eagle Audubon Society
- **Tom McCabe**
- **Bird Conservancy of the Rockies**
- **Point Blue Conservation Science**
- **Photographers,** named with each photograph
- **Cover photo:** Brewer's Blackbird at Ann Morrison Park, Daniel Gonzalez.
- **Back cover photo:** Dark-eyed Junco at Kathryn Albertson Park, Mary Rumple
- **Bird Topography:** Leanne Lloyd-Fairey

**Additional credits:** We thank Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds and eBird websites for certain details about species and their occurrence in the Boise area.

For information about this publication, please contact Boise Parks & Recreation at (208) 608-7600.

Boise Parks & Recreation  
1104 Royal Blvd.  
Boise, ID 83706  
[parks.cityofboise.org](http://parks.cityofboise.org)



Copyright 2015 by Boise Parks & Recreation

## About Us

Boise Parks & Recreation's mission is to enhance the quality of life in Boise by working in partnership with the community to foster and support citizen well-being and healthy community environments.

We provide safe, healthy recreational opportunities for people of all ages through maintenance of Boise's parks, foothills trails, greenbelt pathways and open spaces, golf courses, swimming pools, community centers, and many other amenities.

Our community education program offers a variety of learning opportunities, such as this guide, to enhance enjoyment of our parks and open spaces by fostering awareness and understanding of the important role they play in our lives. We strive to nurture curiosity by presenting opportunities to explore the natural world within a variety of recreational settings.

## Where to Find Birds in Boise

Birds can be found in just about every setting within the city, from urban microparks to the sprawling foothills that border our northeastern edge. They visit backyard feeders, perch in low shrubs and on tall structures, swim in our river, lakes, and ponds, nest in our trees and soar overhead. A variety of habitats in and around the city support and attract hundreds of species. Birds are all around us; we need only to look and listen.

## Purpose of This Guide

Field Guide to Boise's Birds is intended for use in Boise parks, neighborhoods and open spaces by birders of all levels. Its purpose is to enhance enjoyment and stewardship of the city's outdoor spaces through education and awareness of the natural environment.

There are hundreds of species of bird awaiting discovery in Boise. This guide spotlights 99 of them – from tiny song-birds to great raptors – and features local photography and detailed descriptions as guides to species identification.

The species in this guide are arranged in groups based primarily on their taxonomic relationships, with some deviations. For example, owls are not taxonomically related to falcons but they, along with falcons, eagles and hawks, are birds of prey. There are numerous resources available to those wishing to expand their knowledge of birds and their taxonomic relationships. Here are a few we have found helpful:

**Cornell Lab of Ornithology:** [birds.cornell.edu](https://birds.cornell.edu)

- **All About Birds:** [allaboutbirds.org](https://allaboutbirds.org)
- **eBird:** [ebird.org](https://ebird.org)

**Golden Eagle Audubon Society:** [goldeneagleaudubon.org](https://goldeneagleaudubon.org)

**Bird Conservancy of the Rockies:** [birdconservancy.org](https://birdconservancy.org)

**Point Blue Conservation Science:** [pointblue.org](https://pointblue.org)

**American Bird Conservancy:** [abcbirds.org](https://abcbirds.org)

**Intermountain Bird Observatory:** [ibo.boisestate.edu](https://ibo.boisestate.edu)

## A Word About Conservation

By Terry Rich

Birds are among the most beautiful and amazing animals on earth! It's little wonder that bird watching, or "birding," has grown into one of the largest recreational activities in the United States.

A recent national survey estimated that 47 million Americans feed or watch birds. These activities not only provide enjoyment, but they pump billions of dollars a year into our economy. But birds are not just about recreation. Birds play vital roles in our world, consuming untold quantities of insects every day, pollinating flowers, and dispersing seeds. Birds are also excellent indicators of environmental health; they are especially sensitive to changes in habitat, water quality, disease, and climate.

Further, they do this over huge areas and with enormous numbers. Around 10,000 species of birds exist on earth, and some species occur in every habitat except the deep ocean. No other wildlife species compares. Over 900 species occur in North America, and at the end of the breeding season, an estimated 10 billion landbirds – flycatchers, warblers, hummingbirds, orioles, tanagers, and similar species – occur across the continent. Many of them begin to move south for fall migration. Some go as far as Tierra del Fuego, some only as far as the Boise area, and yet others go to all the countries in between. Thus, their role in our world is massive and widespread.



Unfortunately, the populations of many species are declining. According to the 2009 State of the Birds report, 67 are federally listed as endangered or threatened. An additional 184 species are of conservation concern because of declining population trends, high threats, and small populations sizes. The threats to bird populations are many. These include:

- Habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation
- Collisions with towers, windows, power lines, automobiles, and wind turbines
- Predation by cats
- Electrocution
- Oiling and gillnets at sea
- Shooting
- Pollution
- Poisoning

All of these threats are being addressed by bird conservation organizations and natural resource agencies. But many of them can be addressed by YOU. There are a number of ways you can help:

1. Support habitat conservation. Boise Parks and the public lands around Boise managed by BLM, the U.S. Forest Service, and the State of Idaho offer excellent native habitat for birds. The more natural habitats we have for birds, the better.
2. Plant native plant species in your yard, especially those that provide seeds, fruits, and flowers. When birds are traveling through urban environments, they can really use the food.
3. Studies in both the U.S. and Canada reveal that pet



The recovery of Peregrine Falcon populations in North America demonstrates that when society focuses its scientific expertise and its other resources, we can succeed in creating a better future for wildlife and people.

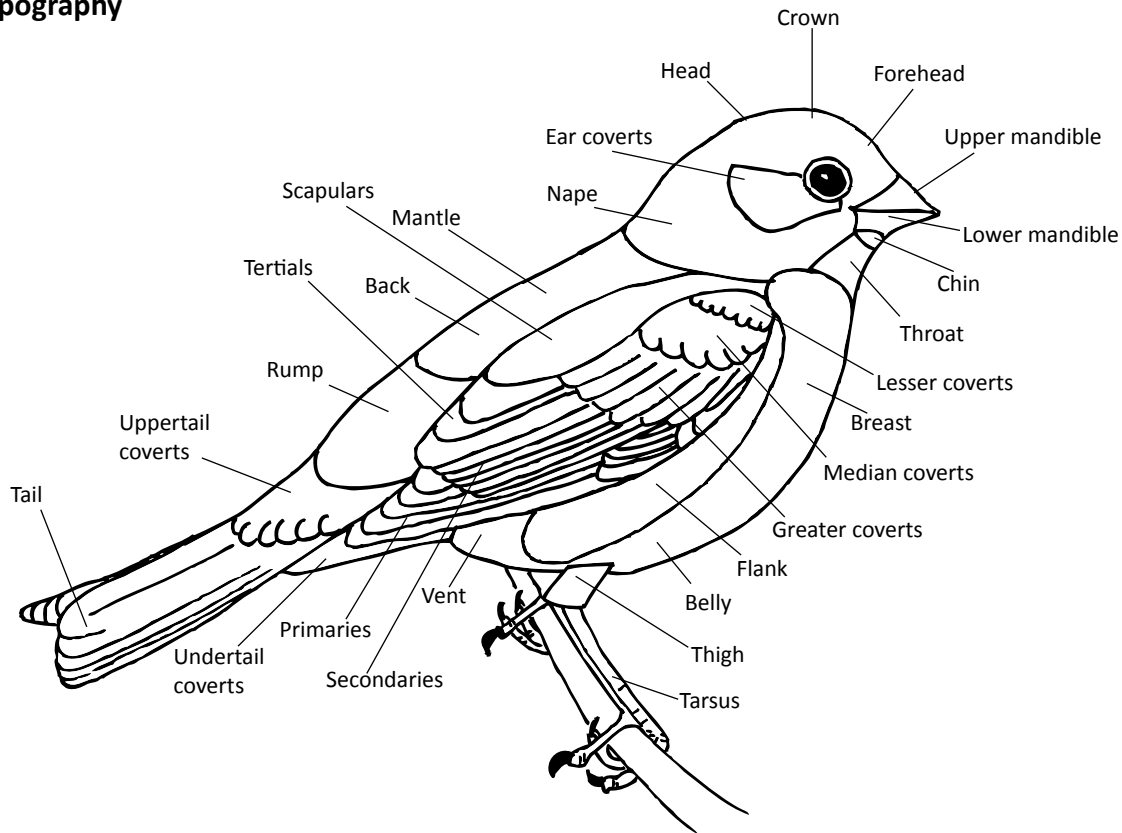
Photograph by Sharon Hayworth

and feral cats cause more bird deaths than any other single cause. The solution is easy – keep your cats indoors and don't release cats into the wild.

4. Many birds die when they collide with windows, both those in office buildings and those in private homes. If you hear or see birds hitting a window in your house, you can attach flagging, stickers, and other items to help birds see your windows. Similar steps can be taken for office buildings, but getting rid of mirror windows is best.
5. Power companies have done a lot to prevent larger birds, such as hawks and eagles, from being electrocuted on power lines. But there are still problem poles out there. If you know of such a pole, report it to Idaho Fish and Game or the Golden Eagle Audubon Society.

The various organizations who are named here and whose logos appear in this guide, all have websites with additional information to help you down the path of greater enjoyment, understanding, and conservation action.

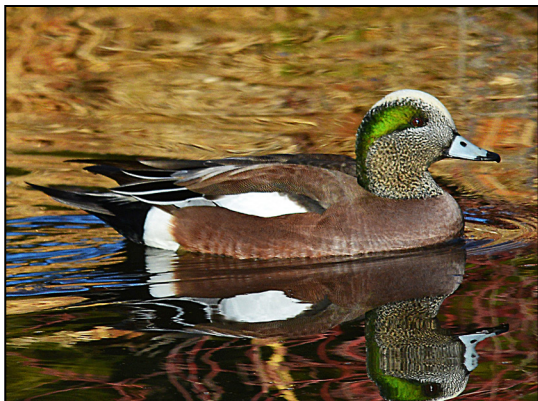
## Bird Topography



## Contents / Bird Viewing Checklist

American Coot .....	28	Canada Goose .....	23
American Crow.....	66	Cedar Waxwing .....	83
American Goldfinch .....	91	Chipping Sparrow .....	101
American Kestrel .....	45	Cinnamon Teal .....	12
American Robin .....	80	Cliff Swallow.....	70
American Wigeon .....	10	Common Goldeneye .....	15
Bald Eagle .....	39	Common Merganser.....	16
Bank Swallow .....	68	Common Nighthawk .....	38
Barn Swallow.....	69	Common Raven.....	67
Barrow's Goldeneye .....	14	Common Yellowthroat .....	96
Belted Kingfisher.....	59	Cooper's Hawk .....	40
Black-billed Magpie .....	65	Dark-eyed Junco .....	106
Black-capped Chickadee .....	74	Double-crested Cormorant .....	24
Black-chinned Hummingbird .....	36	Downy Woodpecker .....	56
Black-headed Grosbeak .....	105	Eurasian Collared-Dove .....	51
Black-necked Stilt .....	29	European Starling.....	84
Bohemian Waxwing .....	82	Evening Grosbeak .....	92
Brewer's Blackbird .....	85	Gadwall.....	13
Brown Creeper .....	75	Gray Catbird .....	81
Brown-headed Cowbird .....	86	Great Blue Heron.....	25
Bufflehead.....	11	Great Egret.....	26
Bullock's Oriole .....	87	Great Horned Owl .....	48
California Gull .....	35	Hairy Woodpecker.....	57
California Quail.....	54	Hooded Merganser.....	17
Calliope Hummingbird .....	37	House Finch .....	93

House Sparrow .....	102	Sharp-shinned Hawk .....	43
House Wren .....	76	Song Sparrow .....	103
Killdeer .....	30	Spotted Sandpiper .....	31
Lazuli Bunting .....	108	Spotted Towhee .....	100
Lesser Goldfinch .....	94	Swainson's Hawk.....	44
Mallard.....	18	Tree Swallow.....	72
Merlin.....	46	Turkey Vulture .....	50
Mourning Dove .....	52	Violet-green Swallow .....	73
Northern Flicker .....	58	Virginia Rail .....	33
Northern Rough-winged Swallow ....	71	Warbling Vireo .....	64
Northern Shoveler .....	19	Western Kingbird .....	62
Osprey.....	41	Western Meadowlark .....	89
Pacific Wren .....	77	Western Screech-Owl .....	49
Peregrine Falcon .....	47	Western Tanager .....	107
Pied-billed Grebe .....	27	Western Wood-Pewee .....	63
Pine Siskin .....	95	White-crowned Sparrow .....	104
Red-breasted Nuthatch .....	78	Wild Turkey .....	55
Red-tailed Hawk .....	42	Willow Flycatcher.....	60
Red-winged Blackbird .....	88	Wilson's Snipe.....	32
Ring-billed Gull .....	34	Wood Duck .....	22
Ring-necked Duck .....	20	Yellow-breasted Chat .....	99
Rock Pigeon .....	53	Yellow-headed Blackbird.....	90
Ruby-crowned Kinglet .....	79	Yellow-rumped Warbler .....	98
Ruddy Duck .....	21	Yellow Warbler .....	97
Say's Phoebe.....	61		



Robert Whitlatch, Kathryn Albertson Park

## American Wigeon

(*Anas americana*)

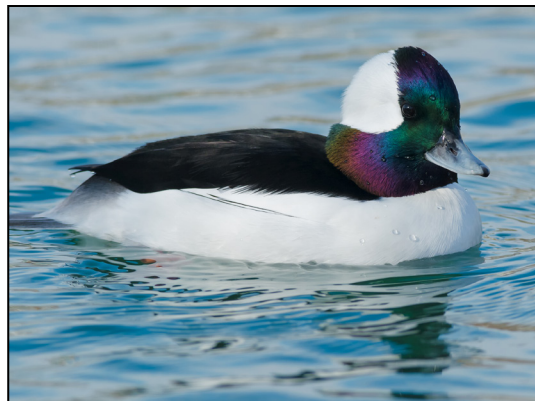
**Identification:** 20" – Male (shown): White crown, green face patch, white patch on wings. Female: Mottled rusty-brown; small, blue-gray bill.

**Habitat:** Ponds, lakes.

**Timing:** Winter.

**Diet:** Vegetation, insects, crustaceans, seeds.

**Note:** Also known as "Baldpate" because male's white crown suggests a bald head.



Shutterstock.com

## Bufflehead

(*Bucephala albeola*)

**Identification:** 13.5" – Male (shown): Black and white with white patch on side of head. Female: Dark brown with less extensive white head patch.

**Habitat:** Ponds, lakes.

**Timing:** Winter.

**Diet:** Aquatic insects and crustaceans, seeds.

**Note:** Nests in cavities made by woodpeckers.





Shutterstock.com

## Cinnamon Teal

(*Anas cyanoptera*)

**Identification:** 14-17" – Male (shown): Bright cinnamon head and body. Female: Gray-brown, small white area at base of bill.

**Habitat:** Ponds, wetlands with open water.

**Timing:** March through October.

**Diet:** Seeds, aquatic vegetation, semi-terrestrial and aquatic insects, snails.

**Note:** Females often hide nests under matted vegetation and gain access to them through tunnels.



Dan R. Cook, Kathryn Albertson Park

## Gadwall

(*Anas strepera*)

**Identification:** 18-22" – Male (shown): Gray-brown with distinctive black tail patch. Female: Brown and yellow-brown.

**Habitat:** Ponds, wetlands.

**Timing:** Year-round; slightly more common in winter.

**Diet:** Submerged vegetation, aquatic invertebrates.

**Note:** Sometimes steals food from American Coots and other ducks.





Shutterstock.com

## Barrow's Goldeneye

(*Bucephala islandica*)

**Identification:** 18" – Striking yellow eyes. Male (shown): White crescent-shaped patch on sides of face, white sides and underparts, black wings and tail. Female: Brown head; gray back, wings, and tail. Sides and underparts white.

**Habitat:** Ponds, lakes.

**Timing:** Winter through March.

**Diet:** Aquatic invertebrates and vegetation.

**Note:** Nests in tree cavities and nesting boxes lined with female downy chest feathers.



Daniel Gonzalez, Kathryn Albertson Park

## Common Goldeneye

(*Bucephala clangula*)

**Identification:** 16-20" – Male (shown): White with black back. Head is black with green iridescence. Circular white spot on face. Female: Brown head with slate-gray back, wings, and tail.

**Habitat:** Rivers, large lakes.

**Timing:** Year-round; most common in winter.

**Diet:** Aquatic invertebrates, small fish, vegetation.

**Note:** One of several species of duck that nest in tree cavities and nest boxes.





Lew Ulrey, Kathryn Albertson Park / Inset: Daniel Gonzalez, Boise River downtown

## Common Merganser

(*Mergus merganser*)

**Identification:** 21-28" – Red bill. Male: White body, dark-green head, black back. Female (inset): Gray body, white chest, rusty head with shaggy crest.

**Habitat:** Rivers, large lakes.

**Timing:** Year-round; more common in winter.

**Diet:** Fish, aquatic invertebrates.

**Note:** The word "merganser" comes from the Latin words "mergo" for plunge and "anser" for goose. It is an appropriate name for a duck that is often submerged.



Daniel Gonzalez, Boise River near Quinn's Pond / Inset: Bob Ellis, West Boise River

## Hooded Merganser

(*Lophodytes cucullatus*)

**Identification:** 16-19" – Male: Black upperparts with white breast, chestnut flanks. Black head has a large white patch that varies in size when the crest is raised (inset) or lowered. Female: Gray and brown, cinnamon tones on the head.

**Habitat:** Small lakes, ponds, rivers, forested wetlands.

**Timing:** September through April; rare in summer.

**Diet:** Fish, crayfish.

**Note:** Can change the refractive properties of its eyes to improve the ability to locate prey underwater.







Virginia Treat, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

## Mallard

(*Anas platyrhynchos*)

**Identification:** 23" – Male (foreground): Glossy green head and white neck ring, chestnut chest, yellowish bill. Female: Brown with a whitish tail. Both sexes have a blue wing patch in flight.

**Habitat:** Ponds, lakes, rivers.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Plant material, insects, crustaceans.

**Note:** Males don't quack. They make a quieter, hoarse-sounding vocalization.



Mary Rumble, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve / Inset: Daniel Gonzalez, Bethine Church River Trail

## Northern Shoveler

(*Anas clypeata*)

**Identification:** 19" – Very long "shovel" bill. Male (shown): Iridescent green head, reddish-brown flanks, white chest. Female: Mottled brown, whitish tail.

**Habitat:** Shallow ponds, edges of lakes and rivers.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Aquatic invertebrates, seeds.

**Note:** Large bill is adapted to filter food from water.







Art Robertson, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

## Ring-necked Duck

(*Aythya collaris*)

**Identification:** 15-18" – Male (left): Dark iridescent head, black back, gray sides. White patch on sides of breast. Bill is dark with white ring near black tip. Female: Bill similar to male's. Brown and gray overall, light eye ring.

**Habitat:** Lakes, ponds, marshes.

**Timing:** Year-round; less common in summer.

**Diet:** Aquatic vegetation, invertebrates.

**Note:** Chestnut-colored ring on black neck is difficult to see and not useful in identification.



Dan R. Cook, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

## Ruddy Duck

(*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

**Identification:** 15" – Male (shown): Dark head, white cheeks. Spiky tail often upturned. Distinctive blue bill in summer. Female: Dark line across pale cheek.

**Habitat:** Wetlands, marshes, ponds, reservoirs, lakes.

**Timing:** Year-round; more common in early spring.

**Diet:** Aquatic insects, crustaceans, zooplankton, aquatic vegetation.

**Note:** Uses its legs and large webbed feet to dive and propel itself underwater for feeding.





Sharon Hayworth, West Boise River Greenbelt

## Wood Duck

(*Aix sponsa*)

**Identification:** 19" – Male (left): Head and crest dark green with white stripes. Red eyes and bill, white throat extending to cheek. Upperparts dark, reddish chest. Female: Brown overall with thick, white teardrop-shaped eye ring.

**Habitat:** Streams, lakes, ponds.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Acorns and other seeds, invertebrates.

**Note:** Nests in tree cavities and nest boxes located near water.



Virginia Treat, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

## Canada Goose

(*Branta canadensis*)

**Identification:** 25-48" – Black neck and head, white cheek patch, brownish back and belly.

**Habitat:** Ponds, lakes, rivers, golf courses, parks where large amounts of grass are available.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Plant material, especially grass, berries, seeds.

**Note:** Widespread throughout North America. Cackling Geese, which are nearly identical to Canada Geese, are also found in Boise and are smaller than their Canada cousins.





Lew Ulrey, Veterans Memorial Park

## Double-crested Cormorant

(*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

**Identification:** 33" – Dark overall with orange throat patch. Young: Pale underparts.

**Habitat:** Rivers, lakes, large ponds.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Fish.

**Note:** A prolific diver, it is often observed perched with wings outstretched to dry.



Carolyn Fletcher, Bown Crossing / Inset: Ryck Tanner, Parkcenter Park

## Great Blue Heron

(*Ardea herodias*)

**Identification:** 46" – Very large and tall, dark coloration. Long legs and neck; stout, pointed bill.

**Habitat:** Marshes; edges of rivers, ponds, and lakes, including suburban wetland habitats.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Mostly fish; also amphibians, gophers, marsh birds.

**Note:** Usually nests in rookeries with egrets and other waterbirds.





Mary Rumble, Riverside Park

## Great Egret

(*Ardea alba*)

**Identification:** 37-40" – Tall with long, dark legs and S-shaped neck. White feathers overall, yellowish-orange bill.

**Habitat:** Wetlands, lakes, ponds, marshes, rivers.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Mainly fish; also amphibians, reptiles, birds, small mammals, invertebrates.

**Note:** Hunted almost to extinction in the late 19th century for the long plumes that grow from its back during mating season.



Bob Ellis, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

## Pied-billed Grebe

(*Podilymbus podiceps*)

**Identification:** 12-15" – Small, brown overall. Distinctive vertical black line on light bill.

**Habitat:** Ponds, lakes, marshes, sluggish rivers.

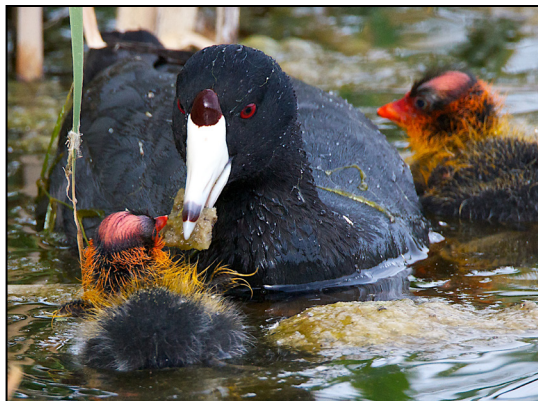
**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Crustaceans, fish, amphibians, insects, other invertebrates.

**Note:** Can trap water in its feathers, allowing it to sink deeply or stay just below the surface.







Dan R. Cook, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

## American Coot

(*Fulica americana*)

**Identification:** 15.5" – Plump, duck-like bird. Blackish overall, white bill, large feet, greenish-yellow legs.

**Habitat:** Small ponds, edges of larger lakes.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Plants, invertebrates, small vertebrates.

**Note:** Although coots are often observed among ducks, they are not ducks and do not have webbing between their toes. Instead, their toes are lobed along the sides.



Lew Ulrey, Marianne Williams Park

## Black-necked Stilt

(*Himantopus mexicanus*)

**Identification:** 14" – Large, with black face, back and bill. White eyebrow, throat and underparts. Very long, thin red legs.

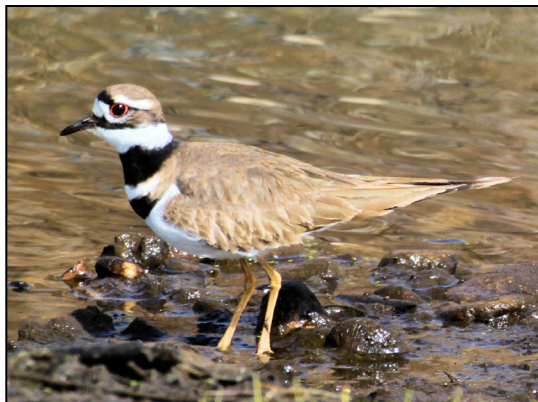
**Habitat:** Shorelines of shallow wetlands and ponds.

**Timing:** Mid-March through mid-September.

**Diet:** Aquatic invertebrates, fish.

**Note:** Works together in groups to fend off predators. One display includes encircling the threat, hopping up and down and flapping wings.





Daniel Gonzalez, Marianne Williams Park

## Killdeer

(*Charadrius vociferus*)

**Identification:** 10.5" – Two bands on breast; unique, reddish-brown rump.

**Habitat:** Shores of ponds, lakes, and rivers; also parking lots and roadsides.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Invertebrates.

**Note:** Commonly observed pretending to have a broken wing to lead potential predators away from nests.



Lew Ulrey, Marianne Williams Park

## Spotted Sandpiper

(*Actitis macularius*)

**Identification:** 7" – Upperparts olive-brown, underparts whitish, white eyebrow, dark eye line. Breast spots in summer only. Bobs tail when feeding and walking.

**Habitat:** Fresh-water shorelines.

**Timing:** Mid-April to mid-September.

**Diet:** Insects, crustaceans, other small invertebrates.

**Note:** Males are the primary caregivers for the young, including incubating the eggs.





Robert Mortensen, Boise Foothills

## Wilson's Snipe

(*Gallinago delicata*)

**Identification:** 11.5" – Stout-bodied with relatively short legs and long, straight bill. Light underparts, intricately patterned brown and yellow-brown on head, throat, breast, back, and wings.

**Habitat:** Wetlands, along the edges of rivers and ponds.

**Timing:** Year-round; most common in spring and early summer.

**Diet:** Insect larvae, invertebrates.

**Note:** Makes a shallow well for nests, which are lined with woven grasses.



Lew Ulrey, Hulls Gulch

## Virginia Rail

(*Rallus limicola*)

**Identification:** 9" – Reddish-brown breast, dark barring on upperparts. Gray face with long, curved red bill. Short tail.

**Habitat:** Marshland.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Aquatic invertebrates.

**Note:** An elusive bird that hides within dense foliage. It builds numerous nests but lays eggs in only one.





Sharon Hayworth, Ann Morrison Park

## Ring-billed Gull

(*Larus delawarensis*)

**Identification:** 17-20" – White head, chest, and underparts; light-gray upperparts. Yellow bill with black ring around tip, yellow eyes.

**Habitat:** Historically coasts and large lakes; now commonly found around humans at garbage dumps, parking lots, and freshly plowed fields.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Fish, insects, rodents, grain, garbage.

**Note:** Females have been recorded laying superclutches of 5-7 eggs in a shared nest.



Ryck Tanner, Julia Davis Park

## California Gull

(*Larus californicus*)

**Identification:** 18-21" – Similar to Ring-billed Gull but with darker gray upperparts and distinguishable red spot on lower mandible. Juvenile: Patterned brownish.

**Habitat:** Historically coasts and large lakes; also farm fields, garbage dumps, parking lots.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Fish, fruit, small mammals, insects, grain, aquatic invertebrates, garbage.

**Note:** Opportunistic feeders, California Gulls sometimes follow farm plows to forage for insects.







Libby Burtner, N.E. Boise neighborhood / Inset: Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## Black-chinned Hummingbird

(*Archilochus alexandri*)

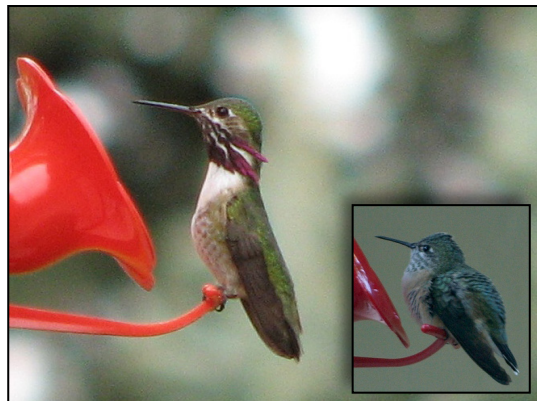
**Identification:** 4" – Upperparts green, underparts whitish. Male: Throat blackish, lower throat blue-violet. Female (inset): Throat whitish.

**Habitat:** Riparian zones, forest patches, suburban areas.

**Timing:** Mid-April through September.

**Diet:** Nectar, insects.

**Note:** As with most hummingbirds, females are typically larger than males.



Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## Calliope Hummingbird

(*Selasphorus calliope*)

**Identification:** 3.5" – Green upperparts. Male: Throat streaked red and white. Female (inset): Whitish throat and whitish or yellow-brown chest and belly.

**Habitat:** Mountainous riparian zones, forest edges, meadows, willow thickets, suburban areas.

**Timing:** Mid-April through mid-September.

**Diet:** Insects, nectar.

**Note:** Smallest bird in North America, north of Mexico, and world's smallest long-distance migratory bird.





Mary Rumble, Barber Park

## Common Nighthawk

(*Chordeiles minor*)

**Identification:** 9" – Slender features; brown, black and/or gray coloring overall. In flight, white bar near base of feathers at tip of wing. Often seen flying at dusk. Erratic, bounding flight is distinctive.

**Habitat:** Sagebrush steppe, urban and suburban areas.

**Timing:** Late May through September.

**Diet:** Insects captured in flight.

**Note:** Winters in South America and is one of the last species to migrate to Idaho in the spring.



Lew Ulrey, Boise River downtown

## Bald Eagle

(*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

**Identification:** 28-38" – Very large, dark raptor. Adults: White head and tail, pale beak. Juvenile (inset): Dark with dark bill.

**Habitat:** Edges of large lakes and rivers.

**Timing:** Year-round; more common in winter.

**Diet:** Prefers fish; also carrion, other prey.

**Note:** Bald Eagles appear large-headed in comparison to Golden Eagles.



Crista Worthy, Hidden Springs

## Cooper's Hawk

(*Accipiter cooperii*)

**Identification:** 17" – Long, rounded, and barred tail. Short, round wings. Adult: Bluish-gray upperparts, reddish bars on underparts. Juvenile (shown): Brown upperparts, brown streaked underparts.

**Habitat:** Coniferous forest; increasingly, suburban habitats with adequate tree cover.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Mostly birds, but occasionally mammals.

**Note:** Frequently preys on birds at seed feeders in winter.



Daniel Gonzalez, Bethine Church River Trail

## Osprey

(*Pandion haliaetus*)

**Identification:** 23" – Dark brown face stripe; head and underparts white, upperparts dark brown. In flight: Long wings with bend at wrist. Distinct underwing pattern with black wrist patches.

**Habitat:** Rivers, lakes.

**Timing:** Mid-March to December.

**Diet:** Fish.

**Note:** The most widespread bird in the world. Found on rivers, lakes, and coasts of all continents except Antarctica.





Ryck Tanner, S.E. Boise River / Inset: Art Robertson, West Boise

## Red-tailed Hawk

(*Buteo jamaicensis*)

**Identification:** 19" – Highly variable in appearance. Adult: Tail broad and rust-colored. Commonly has pale chest, dark band across belly, white spotted V on back. Dark area on leading edge of wing when in flight. Juvenile: Brown tail finely barred black.

**Habitat:** Open woodlands.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Mammals, birds, reptiles.

**Note:** "Dark morph" Red-tailed Hawks can be almost entirely dark brown except for the reddish tail.



Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## Sharp-shinned Hawk

(*Accipiter striatus*)

**Identification:** 9-13" – Long, square-tipped tail and rounded wings. Adult (both): Slate upperparts; barred reddish underparts. Juvenile: Mostly brown with streaked brown-and-white underparts.

**Habitat:** Densely wooded forests and forest edges, suburban settings where bird feeders are present.

**Timing:** Year-round; most common in winter.

**Diet:** Songbirds, small rodents.

**Note:** Parents pass food to young while in flight.





Sharon Hayworth, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve / Inset: Bob Ellis, Federal Way

## Swainson's Hawk

(*Buteo swainsoni*)

**Identification:** 21" – Throat and belly white. Head, upperparts, and chest dark brown. In flight: Long, pointed wings; underwings brown and white.

**Habitat:** Open spaces, including agricultural land.

**Timing:** Late March through mid-September.

**Diet:** Small mammals, reptiles, large insects.

**Note:** Sometimes forms migrating and soaring groups numbering in the thousands.



Art Robertson, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

## American Kestrel

(*Falco sparverius*)

**Identification:** 9" – Small falcon with long, pointed wings and long tail. Boldly patterned face, reddish-brown upperparts with black bars. Male (inset): Blue-gray wings.

**Habitat:** Taller trees, especially those with dead branches; urban and rural areas.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Insects, small mammals, birds.

**Note:** Often seen perched on wires in open habitat. Hovers while hunting.







Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## Merlin

(*Falco columbarius*)

**Identification:** 9-12" – Light-colored chest with dark barring or mottling, thin white eyebrow. Male (shown): Upperparts slate to dark gray. Female and juveniles: Brown.

**Habitat:** Near rivers and lakes, residential areas.

**Timing:** Fall through spring; rare in summer.

**Diet:** Small to medium-sized birds caught in flight.

**Note:** Sometimes hunts in pairs, confusing prey.



Sharon Hayworth, West Boise Greenbelt

## Peregrine Falcon

(*Falco peregrinus*)

**Identification:** 14-19" – Adult: Slate upperparts, light breast, barred thighs and underparts. Juvenile (shown): Pale crown, dark back and wings with prominent streaking on yellow-brown underparts.

**Habitat:** Tall structures in both urban and suburban settings; open areas, near water.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Mostly birds; also bats, fish, rodents.

**Note:** Females are typically larger than males.





Daniel Gonzalez, Bethine Church River Trail

## Great Horned Owl

(*Bubo virginianus*)

**Identification:** 22" – Gray-brown with thick ear tufts ("horns"). Yellow eyes, white throat.

**Habitat:** Almost all habitats, especially where woodland patches are adjacent to open areas.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians.

**Note:** Fierce predator that can take down large prey, including large raptors and other owls, as well as rats and other mammals.



Mary Rumble, Kathryn Albertson Park

## Western Screech-Owl

(*Megascops kennicottii*)

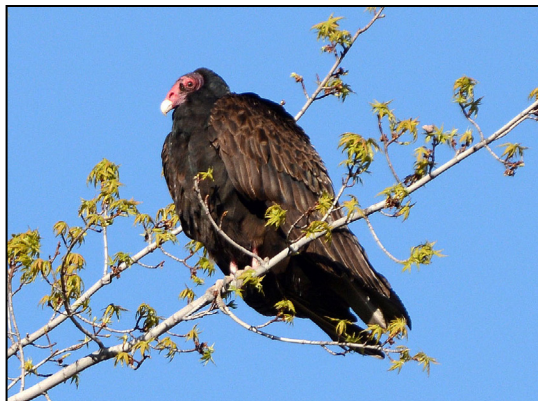
**Identification:** 8.5" – Gray or gray-brown with dark streaking, ear tufts, yellow eyes.

**Habitat:** Wooded riparian areas.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Small animals, particularly mammals.

**Note:** Call is an accelerating series of short hoots.



Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## Turkey Vulture

(*Cathartes aura*)

**Identification:** 26" – Large, soaring bird. Adult (shown): Small, unfeathered red head. Dark brown to blackish body, with two-toned underwing visible from below. Soars with wings held above head in shallow V. Juvenile: Dark head.

**Habitat:** All.

**Timing:** March through mid-September.

**Diet:** Carrion.

**Note:** Uses its excellent sense of smell to locate food.



Dan R. Cook, Kathryn Albertson Park

## Eurasian Collared-Dove

(*Streptopelia decaocto*)

**Identification:** 11-12" – Typically larger than the native Mourning Dove; black collar on back of neck and square, white-tipped tail.

**Habitat:** Small towns, rural housing clusters; attracted to human habitations.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Seeds and grains in agricultural settings.

**Note:** This non-native species has spread rapidly across North America and is expected to steadily increase in the Boise area in the near future.







Daniel Gonzalez, Shoreline Park

## Mourning Dove

(*Zenaida macroura*)

**Identification:** 10" – Gray-brown overall. Black spots on wings and single spot on each cheek. Long, pointed tail tipped white; short legs, pink feet, small bill. Head looks small in comparison to body.

**Habitat:** Sagebrush steppe, riparian zones, woodlands, suburban habitats.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Seeds, some insects.

**Note:** The oldest Mourning Dove on record was over 31 years old.



Daniel Gonzalez, Veterans Memorial Park

## Rock Pigeon

(*Columba livia*)

**Identification:** 11-14" – Chunky with small head and short legs. Colors vary, but typically brown and/or blue-gray with two dark wing bands. Darker tail tip, iridescent throat, pink feet.

**Habitat:** Urban areas, especially parks and other busy places where people may offer food.

**Timing:** Year-round

**Diet:** Seeds, fruit, human leavings.

**Note:** Carried messages for the U.S. Army during both world wars.





Crista Worthy, Hidden Springs

## California Quail

(*Callipepla californica*)

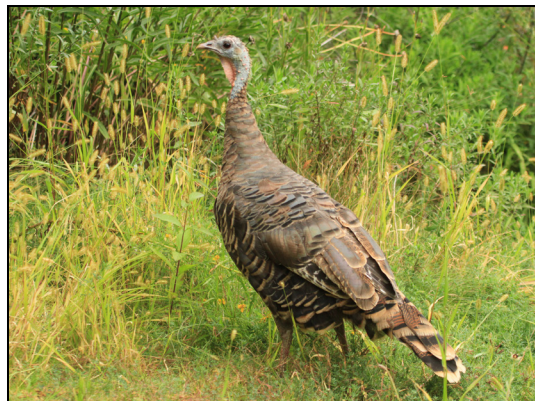
**Identification:** 10" – Chunky with black plume on forehead. Gray-brown, scaled belly. Often in groups. Male (right): White-bordered black face and throat. Female: Brown overall with shorter plume.

**Habitat:** Suburban habitats, pastures, agricultural borders with good cover.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Seeds, leaves.

**Note:** Chicks may mix after hatching, and all the parents participate in caring for the young.



Daniel Gonzalez, Kathryn Albertson Park

## Wild Turkey

(*Meleagris gallopavo*)

**Identification:** 44" – Large with long neck and rounded, light-tipped tail. Head appears disproportionately small. Dark barring on wings. Dark overall with iridescence. Head and neck vary in color from red to blue and gray.

**Habitat:** Open, grassy areas; woodlands.

**Timing:** Year-round

**Diet:** Seeds, berries, nuts, vegetation, insects.

**Note:** Valued for its size, the Wild Turkey is a popular game bird.





Mary Rumble, Barber Park

## Downy Woodpecker

(*Picoides pubescens*)

**Identification:** 7" – Black and white with white underparts and back stripe. Short, stubby bill; black bars on tail. Male (shown): Red on back of crown.

**Habitat:** Woodland patches, riparian zones, suburban habitats.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** A common member of mixed-species flocks in winter.



Shutterstock.com

## Hairy Woodpecker

(*Picoides villosus*)

**Identification:** 7-10" – Black and white with white underparts, white-barred black wings and white back stripe. Black head has two white stripes. Long, gray bill. Male (shown): Red on back of crown.

**Habitat:** Mature woodlands, suburban parks, orchards.

**Timing:** Year-round; most common in late summer and early fall.

**Diet:** Mostly insects; also fruit, seeds, sap.

**Note:** Oldest known Hairy Woodpecker lived to almost 16 years.





Crista Worthy, Hidden Springs / Inset: Mary Rumble, Barber Park

## Northern Flicker

(*Colaptes auratus*)

**Identification:** 13" – Head grayish, upperparts gray-brown with black barring, underparts whitish with black spots. In flight: Striking red underwings. Male (inset): Red mustache stripe.

**Habitat:** Suburban habitats, riparian zones, woodlands, forests.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Ants and other insects, fruit, berries.

**Note:** Often seen on the ground where they eat ants.



Daniel Gonzalez, Kathryn Albertson Park

## Belted Kingfisher

(*Megasceryle alcyon*)

**Identification:** 13" – Long, pointed bill; bushy head. Upperparts blue-gray with white collar, underparts white with blue-gray band across chest. Female (shown): Also has rusty band across chest.

**Habitat:** Ponds, lakes, rivers.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Small fish.

**Note:** Nests in burrows in banks.







Shutterstock.com

## Willow Flycatcher

(*Empidonax traillii*)

**Identification:** 6" – Upperparts brownish, underparts pale with gray chest. Yellow tinge to belly, faint eye ring, tan wing bars.

**Habitat:** Shrubby areas near water.

**Timing:** Summer.

**Diet:** Insects; occasionally berries in late summer.

**Note:** Like all flycatchers, the song of the Willow Flycatcher is innate, not learned.



Lew Ulrey, Hidden Springs / Inset: Mary Rumble, S.E. Boise neighborhood

## Say's Phoebe

(*Sayornis saya*)

**Identification:** 7.5" – Upperparts, head and chest shades of gray-brown. Underparts cinnamon. Darker tail and wings. Dark bill, legs and eye.

**Habitat:** Sagebrush steppe.

**Timing:** March through September.

**Diet:** Flying or terrestrial insects.

**Note:** Often nests on human-made structures, building open nests on ledges with overhangs.





Robert Mortensen, Boise Foothills

## Western Kingbird

(*Tyrannus verticalis*)

**Identification:** 9" – Head gray with darker mask, upperparts gray. Throat white, chest pale gray, belly yellow. Tail black with white outer edges.

**Habitat:** Sagebrush steppe, open woodlands.

**Timing:** Mid-April to September.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** Nests in tree canopies and often on human structures. Commonly perches on utility lines and nests on poles.



Daniel Gonzalez, Bethine Church River Trail

## Western Wood-Pewee

(*Contopus sordidulus*)

**Identification:** 6" – Grayish-brown overall with paler throat and belly, pale wing bars. Darker than other flycatchers, no eye ring. Perches prominently, does not flick tail.

**Habitat:** Woodlands, forests.

**Timing:** Summer.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** Hunts from a perch, which it returns to after each catch.





Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## Warbling Vireo

(*Vireo gilvus*)

**Identification:** 5" – Plain gray bird. White eyebrow, whitish underparts sometimes with yellowish tinge.

**Habitat:** Wooded areas, often near people.

**Timing:** Summer.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** Named for the up-and-down melody of the male's song.



Robert Whitlatch, Kathryn Albertson Park / Inset: Daniel Gonzalez, Marianne Williams Park

## Black-billed Magpie

(*Pica hudsonia*)

**Identification:** 18-24" – Large bird with long, black tail. Broad wings with bluish iridescence. Black head, chest, and bill. White shoulders and belly.

**Habitat:** Sagebrush steppe, woodlands, riparian zones, suburban areas.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Insects, lizards, small mammals.

**Note:** Sometimes caches food in piles on the ground.





Robert Whitlatch, Bown Crossing

## American Crow

(*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

**Identification:** 18" – All black with short, squared tail and broad wings. Bill stout and black.

**Habitat:** Widespread, often seen in large flocks. Thrives near people; nests in trees.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, small birds and mammals, seeds, fruit, carrion.

**Note:** Sometimes mistaken for the all-black but much larger Common Raven, which can also be found in Boise.



Shutterstock.com

## Common Raven

(*Corvus corax*)

**Identification:** 22-27" – Large, all black with thick neck and shaggy throat. Long, thick bill; long tail.

**Habitat:** Open and forested habitats, high desert, sagebrush, urban, suburban and rural settings.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Carrion, small mammals, birds, eggs, invertebrates, fish, grain, seeds, fruit.

**Note:** An intelligent bird and dangerous predator, sometimes working in pairs to hunt.







Shutterstock.com

## Bank Swallow

(*Riparia riparia*)

**Identification:** 5" – Upperparts brown, underparts white with brown breast band.

**Habitat:** Nests in holes in banks and cliffs.

**Timing:** April through mid-September.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** Colonial species that nests in groups of up to 2,000 nests. Similar in appearance to Northern Rough-winged Swallow; breast band is a distinguishing feature.



Shutterstock.com

## Barn Swallow

(*Hirundo rustica*)

**Identification:** 7" – Deeply forked tail. Head and upperparts glossy blue-black, forehead and throat chestnut. Yellow-brown underparts.

**Habitat:** Pastures, hay fields, riparian zones, suburban areas.

**Timing:** April through mid-October.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** Winters as far south as Tierra del Fuego.





Shutterstock.com

## Cliff Swallow

(*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*)

**Identification:** 5" – Brick-red face, bright whitish forehead patch, yellow-brown rump patch.

**Habitat:** Forages in a wide variety of riparian, pasture, and suburban habitats where structures, such as bridges, provide sites for mud nests.

**Timing:** Late March through mid-September.

**Diet:** Insects taken in flight.

**Note:** Highly colonial species; the largest known colony contained 3,700 nests.



Shutterstock.com

## Northern Rough-winged Swallow

(*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*)

**Identification:** 5-6" – Brown upperparts, whitish underparts; dusky wash on throat and breast.

**Habitat:** Breeds in a wide variety of habitats, often near water.

**Timing:** Late March through September.

**Diet:** Insects caught on the wing.

**Note:** Named for the small hooks on leading edges of wing feathers.





Shutterstock.com

## Tree Swallow

(*Tachycineta bicolor*)

**Identification:** 5" – Upperparts glossy greenish-blue, throat and underparts white. Some females have brown upperparts.

**Habitat:** Shorelines, wooded areas near water.

**Timing:** March through mid-September.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** Sometimes forms flocks of thousands that swirl around roosting sites before settling for the night.



Bob Ellis, Jim Hall Foothills Learning Center

## Violet-green Swallow

(*Tachycineta thalassina*)

**Identification:** 5" – Crown and upperparts dark green, sometimes with purplish rump. Male (shown): Face, throat, and underparts white. Female similar, but face duller-patterned.

**Habitat:** Open woodlands at higher elevations.

**Timing:** Mid-March to September.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** Within the United States, found only in the West.





Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## Black-capped Chickadee

(*Poecile atricapillus*)

**Identification:** 5" – Tiny, with black cap and throat; white cheeks, gray back, whitish underparts.

**Habitat:** Riparian zones, forest patches, suburban habitats.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Insects, seeds.

**Note:** Complex calls can communicate identity and recognition of other flocks as well as varying degrees of predator alarms.



Mary Rumble, Barber Park

## Brown Creeper

(*Certhia americana*)

**Identification:** 5" – Brown on back, light underneath; long, decurved bill.

**Habitat:** Large trees in forests; typically forages upward on tree trunks, like a woodpecker.

**Timing:** Year-round; more common in winter.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** Indicator of healthy, older forests with large trees.





Robert Whitlatch, Idaho Botanical Garden

## House Wren

(*Troglodytes aedon*)

**Identification:** 5" – Brownish overall, paler underparts. Pale eye ring, barred wings and tail.

**Habitat:** Dense shrubs in riparian areas, woodlands, junipers, forest edges.

**Timing:** April through early October.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** Has one of the largest ranges of any songbird, occurring from central Canada to Tierra del Fuego.



Robert Mortensen, Boise Foothills

## Pacific Wren

(*Troglodytes pacificus*)

**Identification:** 4" – Brown overall, dark bill and eye, lighter eyebrow. Short, stubby tail held up at an angle.

**Habitat:** Often near water in wooded areas with dense undergrowth.

**Timing:** Fall through spring.

**Diet:** Invertebrates.

**Note:** Cavity nester, sometimes using existing holes made by other birds.







Dan R. Cook, Kathryn Albertson Park / Inset: Robert Whitlatch, Barber Park

## Red-breasted Nuthatch

(*Sitta canadensis*)

**Identification:** 4" – Blue-gray upperparts, black cap. Black stripe through eye, white stripe over eye. Underparts rich rusty-cinnamon; paler in females.

**Habitat:** Coniferous forests, patches of conifers in suburban settings.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Seeds, insects.

**Note:** Applies sticky coniferous resin around the entrance to nesting cavities, which may discourage predators.



Dan R. Cook, Kathryn Albertson Park

## Ruby-crowned Kinglet

(*Regulus calendula*)

**Identification:** 4" – Drab olive upperparts. White wing bars and eye ring, thin blackish legs, thin bill. Male (shown): Mostly concealed red patch on head; sometimes brighter yellow on wings and tail.

**Habitat:** Woodlands, forests, mountain-shrub habitats.

**Timing:** Winter.

**Diet:** Spiders, insects, fruit, seeds.

**Note:** Breeding pairs typically stay together until their offspring leave the nest.







Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## American Robin

(*Turdus migratorius*)

**Identification:** 10" – Head and upperparts dark gray; head often blacker. Rusty underparts, yellow bill, white around the eye.

**Habitat:** Urban lawns, mixed forests, junipers.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Insects, berries, earthworms.

**Note:** Forms flocks in winter and may move up-slope where berries are still available.



Shutterstock.com

## Gray Catbird

(*Dumetella carolinensis*)

**Identification:** 9" – Mostly slate; dark cap, eye, and bill. Reddish-brown undertail. Long, rounded tail.

**Habitat:** Dense shrubs and thickets, residential areas, farmlands.

**Timing:** May through October.

**Diet:** Insects, fruit.

**Note:** Copies the sounds of others birds, stringing them together in songs that can last several minutes.





Robert Mortensen, Boise Foothills

## Bohemian Waxwing

(*Bombycilla garrulus*)

**Identification:** 8" – Brownish-gray overall, black mask, yellow-tipped tail. Reddish crest on head and undertail. White edges on wing feathers.

**Habitat:** Open forests, urban and suburban parks and gardens.

**Timing:** November through May

**Diet:** Insects, fruit.

**Note:** Name refers to the roaming movements of winter flocks.



Mary Rumple, S.E. Boise neighborhood / Inset: Daniel Gonzalez, Shoreline Park

## Cedar Waxwing

(*Bombycilla cedrorum*)

**Identification:** 7" – Crested brownish-red head, black mask, pale-yellow belly. Gray tail with yellow band at tips. Inner wing feathers may have "waxy" red tips.

**Habitat:** Riparian zones, woodlands, forest edges, suburban habitats where berries are available.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Fruit, insects.

**Note:** Specializes on fruit and can become intoxicated from consumption of over-ripe berries. Often found in large flocks in winter.





Lew Ulrey, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

## European Starling

(*Sturnus vulgaris*)

**Identification:** 9" – Glossy black with green and purple iridescence, short tail, triangular wings. Most whitish spots on tips of fresh fall feathers wear off by spring.

**Habitat:** Near human activity: Urban and suburban habitats, agricultural areas such as feedlots.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Invertebrates, fruit, grains, seeds.

**Note:** This non-native species occupies nest cavities and prevents native species, such as bluebirds, chickadees, and woodpeckers, from using those sites.



Robert Whitlatch, Harris Ranch

## Brewer's Blackbird

(*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

**Identification:** 9" – Male (shown): Iridescent black all over with yellow or yellow-white eyes. Female: Dark eyes and wings, dull gray-brown body.

**Habitat:** Open woodlands, shrubby areas, feedlots; typically near moist areas.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Invertebrates, seeds.

**Note:** Some learn to wait at stoplights and pick insects from the grills of stopped vehicles.





Mary Rumble, Barber Park

## Brown-headed Cowbird

(*Molothrus ater*)

**Identification:** 8" – Small, stout bill; short tail. Male (shown): Black body, dark-brown head; often appears entirely black. Female: Dull-brown coloring overall, often finely streaked with pale throat.

**Habitat:** All.

**Timing:** April through mid-September.

**Diet:** Seeds, insects.

**Note:** Lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, often reducing the ability of "host" birds to raise any young of their own.



Mary Rumble, Hulls Gulch

## Bullock's Oriole

(*Icterus bullockii*)

**Identification:** 9" – Male (shown): Face and underparts orange, black eye line and throat. Crown and back black, wings black and white. Female: Upperparts olive-gray, underparts yellow and gray. Two white wing bars.

**Habitat:** Riparian zones; large, deciduous trees in suburban and rural habitats.

**Timing:** Late April through early September.

**Diet:** Insects, berries, nectar.

**Note:** Builds beautiful hanging, basket-like nests.







Daniel Gonzalez, Kathryn Albertson Park / Inset: Warm Springs Park

## Red-winged Blackbird

(*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

**Identification:** 9" – Male: Black overall, bright red patch on each shoulder. Female (inset): Brown with dark streaking.

**Habitat:** Marshes, wetlands, canals, river edges.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Insects, seeds.

**Note:** As many as 15 females have been observed breeding with one male, although many of the offspring turn out to be from males in neighboring territories.



Robert Mortensen, Boise Foothills

## Western Meadowlark

(*Sturnella neglecta*)

**Identification:** 9.5" – Bright yellow underparts, black breast band, white outer tail feathers. Upperparts pale brown. Tail appears stubby in flight.

**Habitat:** Sagebrush steppe, grasslands.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Seeds, insects.

**Note:** Females build nests on the ground, sometimes with an elaborate entrance tunnel and grassy roof.







Virginia Treat, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

## Yellow-headed Blackbird

(*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)

**Identification:** 9" – Stout, conical bill. Male: Mostly black, bright yellow head and breast. White wing patch, dark eye ring. Female: (inset) Brown with yellow on face and breast.

**Habitat:** Wetlands; shallows of ponds and rivers.

**Timing:** March through September; most common in mid-May.

**Diet:** Insects, seeds.

**Note:** Often seen in same nesting areas as Red-winged Blackbirds, which it sometimes displaces.



Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood / Inset: Crista Worthy, Hidden Springs

## American Goldfinch

(*Spinus tristis*)

**Identification:** 5" – Bright yellow to dull brown with white wing bars. Conical, pinkish bill. Breeding male: Bright yellow with black cap and wings. Female (inset): Dull olive.

**Habitat:** Urban settings, riparian zones.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Seeds.

**Note:** Starts breeding when many other species are winding down in their nesting cycle (June & July).





Shutterstock.com

## Evening Grosbeak

(*Coccothraustes vespertinus*)

**Identification:** 6-7" – Heavy-looking with thick neck and stout, conical bill. Male (shown): Bright yellow and black, dark head, yellow stripe over eye, white wing patch. Female: Gray with white and black wings, greenish-yellow bill, yellow patch on nape.

**Habitat:** Urban and suburban habitats, close to bird feeders; coniferous forests.

**Timing:** Year-round; less common in mid-summer.

**Diet:** Seeds, invertebrates.

**Note:** Powerful bill enables cracking of seeds too large for most songbirds. Forms large, nomadic flocks.



Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## House Finch

(*Haemorhous mexicanus*)

**Identification:** 6" – Upperparts gray-brown with faint streaks, underparts whitish with brown streaks. Male (shown): Head, chest, and rump red; brown cheek patch. Female: Plain brown face.

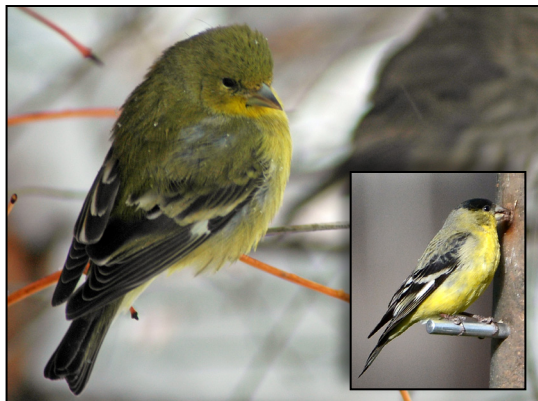
**Habitat:** Suburban habitats, woodlands, junipers.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Seeds, berries.

**Note:** The most ubiquitous, or common, native bird in the Boise area.





Crista Worthy, Hidden Springs / Inset: Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## Lesser Goldfinch

(*Spinus psaltria*)

**Identification:** 5" – Upperparts greenish, underparts yellowish. Wings black with white patches. Male (inset): Black crown.

**Habitat:** Suburban habitats, thickets, weedy fields, woodlands, farmlands.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Seeds, insects.

**Note:** Unlike American Goldfinch, retains its yellow coloration year-round.



Lew Ulrey, West Bench neighborhood

## Pine Siskin

(*Spinus pinus*)

**Identification:** 4-5" – Brown and streaky, subtle yellow edgings on wings and tail.

**Habitat:** Various types of coniferous and mixed forests; also fields and feeders where seeds are plentiful.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Seeds, especially thistle seeds in feeders.

**Note:** Nomadic species. May be common in an area one year and rare the next.





Lew Ulrey, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

## Common Yellowthroat

(*Geothlypis trichas*)

**Identification:** 5" – Upperparts olive, throat and chest yellow. Male (shown): Black mask with white border.

**Habitat:** Marshes, wet meadows and riparian zones with heavy cover.

**Timing:** Late April through early October.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** One of the first bird species to be formally recognized in the New World, documented by Carl Linnaeus in 1766.



Mary Rumple, Marianne Williams Park

## Yellow Warbler

(*Setophaga petechia*)

**Identification:** 5" – Yellow overall with greenish-yellow wings and tail. Male (shown): Reddish streaks on chest. Female: Duller yellow, little to no streaking on chest.

**Habitat:** Wooded areas.

**Timing:** Mid-April through September.

**Diet:** Insects.

**Note:** These small birds are sometimes caught in spider webs.





Bob Ellis, Hulls Gulch

## Yellow-rumped Warbler

(*Setophaga coronata*)

**Identification:** 5.5" – Yellow rump and side patches, white outer tail feathers. Overall plumage ranges from brown to blue-gray. Throat yellow or white. Male (shown): More brightly colored than female.

**Habitat:** Forests, woodlands.

**Timing:** Year-round; less common in summer.

**Diet:** Insects, fruit.

**Note:** Females build nests using a variety of materials, including fur and feathers.



Mary Rumble, Hulls Gulch

## Yellow-breasted Chat

(*Icteria virens*)

**Identification:** 8" – White "spectacles." Throat and chest yellow, belly white, upperparts grayish-olive.

**Habitat:** Dense scrub and brush habitats.

**Timing:** Mid-April to late summer.

**Diet:** Insects, berries.

**Note:** Collects food with its feet. Song is loud series of chuckles, chortles and whistles.







Dan R. Cook, Kathryn Albertson Park / Inset: Robert Whitlatch, Hulls Gulch

## Spotted Towhee

(*Pipilo maculatus*)

**Identification:** 9" – Head, chest, and upperparts black; sides rusty. Red eyes, white spotting on wings. Long, black tail. Female similar but grayish-brown where male is black.

**Habitat:** Scrubby areas with dense cover.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Insects, seeds, berries.

**Note:** Ground-nesters, females build nests in shallow wells, the rim flush with or just above ground level.



Dan R. Cook, Kathryn Albertson Park

## Chipping Sparrow

(*Spizella passerina*)

**Identification:** 5-6" – Bright reddish-brown cap, black stripe through eye, white eyebrow. Non-breeding adult (shown): Plain gray breast, mostly brown overall.

**Habitat:** Prefers conifers in forests, woodlands, and suburban areas.

**Timing:** April through October.

**Diet:** Seeds, insects.

**Note:** In winter, can consume up to 70 times its own weight in food.





Daniel Gonzalez, S.W. Boise neighborhood / Inset: Libby Burtner, Hidden Springs

## House Sparrow

(*Passer domesticus*)

**Identification:** 6-7" – Male (inset): Gray head with white cheeks, black bib, reddish-brown neck. Female: Plain yellowish-brown upperparts, grayish underparts.

**Habitat:** Urban, suburban, near human dwellings in rural areas.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Seeds, insects.

**Note:** Introduced in New York in the mid-1800s. By 1900, it had made its way to the Rocky Mountains and is now common over most of North America.



Mary Rumble, Kathryn Albertson Park

## Song Sparrow

(*Melospiza melodia*)

**Identification:** 4.5-6.5" – Upperparts reddish-brown with dark streaking, gray face with dark stripes. Underparts whitish with heavy streaking, often forming a dark spot on center of breast.

**Habitat:** Numerous, including riparian, suburban, and desert scrub.

**Timing:** Year-round.

**Diet:** Insects, seeds.

**Note:** Breeding pairs choose nesting sites together, preferring hidden locations in grasses and trees.





Mary Rumple, Marianne Williams Park

## White-crowned Sparrow

(*Zonotrichia leucophrys*)

**Identification:** 6" – Streaky brown upperparts, plain gray underparts. Adult (shown): Black and white crown stripes. Young: Brown crown stripes.

**Habitat:** Open, brushy habitat with grasses.

**Timing:** September to May.

**Diet:** Seeds, buds, grass, fruit, arthropods.

**Note:** Famous for its song "dialects," whereby subpopulations share songs that differ from each other.



Dan R. Cook, Kathryn Albertson Park

## Black-headed Grosbeak

(*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

**Identification:** 8" – Male (shown): Orange-brown with black head. Wings black and white. Female: Upperparts brown, underparts streaked, tan eyebrow.

**Habitat:** Riparian zones, forests.

**Timing:** May through September.

**Diet:** Insects, seeds, berries.

**Note:** Males do not get adult plumage until they are two years old. In their first year, males may appear to be female.





Mary Rumble, Kathryn Albertson Park / Inset: S.E. Boise neighborhood

## Dark-eyed Junco

(*Junco hyemalis*)

**Identification:** 6" – Pink bill, white outer tail feathers, pinkish-brown sides. Male (inset): Dark head. Female: Head light brownish-gray to glossy black, lighter overall.

**Habitat:** Suburban settings.

**Timing:** Year-round; much more common in winter.

**Diet:** Seeds, arthropods, fruit.

**Note:** Moves to higher-elevation forests to nest and migrates down-slope to winter.



Shutterstock.com

## Western Tanager

(*Piranga ludoviciana*)

**Identification:** 7" – Dark eye; short, thick bill. Male (shown): Striking red crown and chin, orange throat, yellow body. Wings are black with two light-colored wing bars; black tail. Female: Yellow head and body, gray wings with light wing bars, gray tail.

**Habitat:** Forests, woodlands, parks, orchards.

**Timing:** May through September.

**Diet:** Insects, fruit, seeds.

**Note:** Red coloration likely comes from pigment of insects in its diet.





Crista Worthy, Hidden Springs

## Lazuli Bunting

(*Passerina amoena*)

**Identification:** 6" – Male (shown): Head and upperparts turquoise-blue, chest cinnamon, underparts white. Two white wing bars. Female: Upperparts brown, underparts paler brown. Two pale wing bars and pale eye ring.

**Habitat:** Tall shrubs and saplings near open areas.

**Timing:** Late April through mid-September.

**Diet:** Seeds, insects.

**Note:** Young males often copy the songs of neighboring males, creating similar dialects.







Point Blue  
Conservation  
Science

Bird  
Conservancy  
of the Rockies