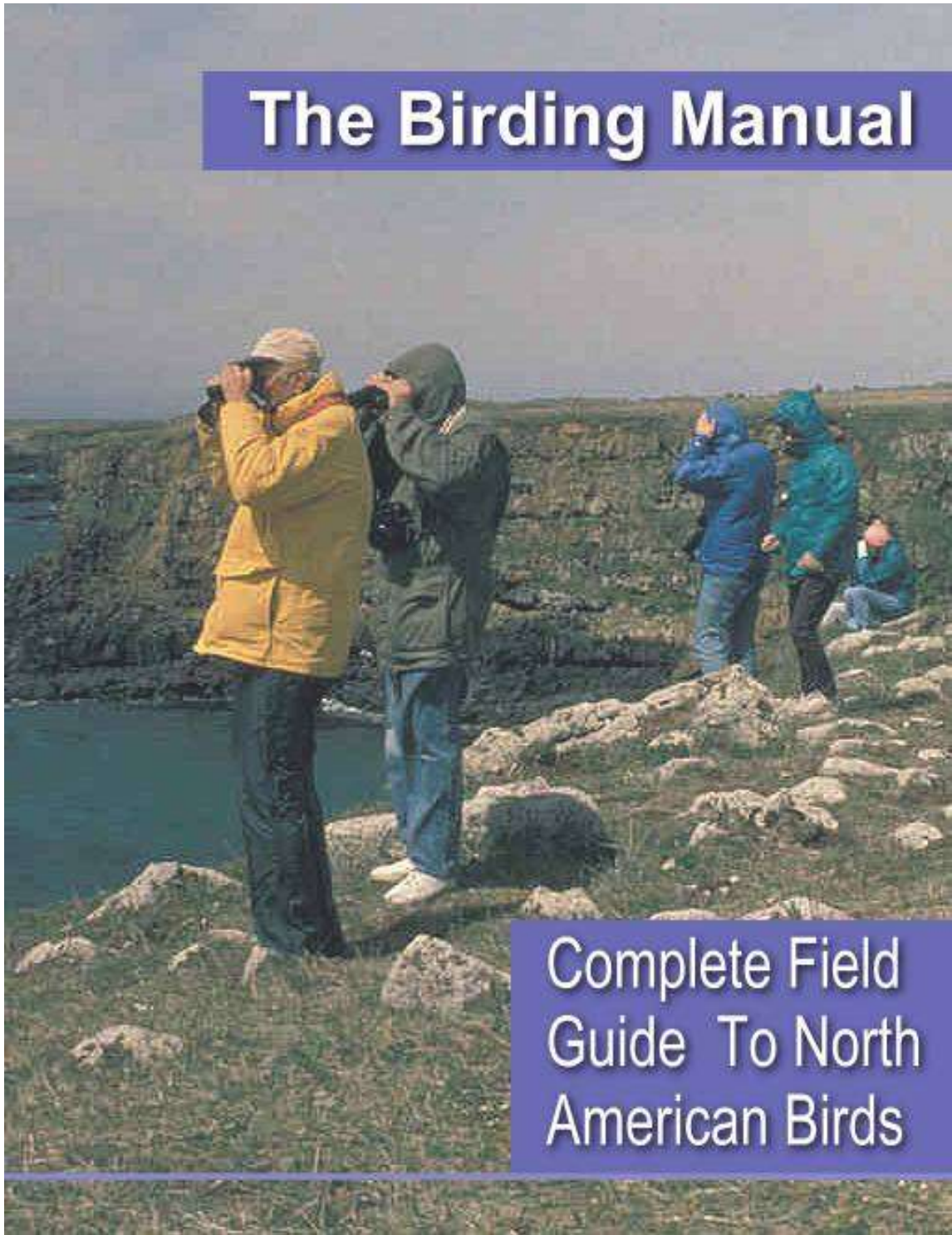


The Birding Manual

Complete Field
Guide To North
American Birds



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134. Spectacled Eider *Somateria fischeri*
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- 161. Gray Hawk *Asturina nitida*
- 162. Common Black-Hawk *Buteogallus anthracinus*
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- 165. Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus*
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- 168. Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni*
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- 178. American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*
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- 187. Ring-necked Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*
- 188. Ruffed Grouse *Bonasa umbellus*
- 189. Greater Sage-Grouse *Centrocercus urophasianus*
- 190. Gunnison Sage-Grouse *Centrocercus minimus*
- 191. Spruce Grouse *Falcipennis canadensis*
- 192. Willow Ptarmigan *Lagopus lagopus*
- 193. Rock Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus*
- 194. White-tailed Ptarmigan *Lagopus leucurus*
- 195. Blue Grouse *Dendragapus obscurus*
- 196. Sharp-tailed Grouse *Tympanuchus phasianellus*
- 197. Greater Prairie-Chicken *Tympanuchus cupido*
- 198. Lesser Prairie-Chicken *Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*

199. Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo*

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200. Mountain Quail *Oreortyx pictus*
201. Scaled Quail *Callipepla squamata*
202. California Quail *Callipepla californica*
203. Gambel's Quail *Callipepla gambelii*
204. Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus*
205. Montezuma Quail *Cyrtonyx montezumae*

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207. Black Rail *Laterallus jamaicensis*
208. Clapper Rail *Rallus longirostris*
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- 219. American Golden-Plover *Pluvialis dominica*
- 220. Pacific Golden-Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
- 221. Mongolian Plover *Charadrius mongolus*
- 223. Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia*
- 224. Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*
- 225. Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*
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- 230. Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*
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- 232. Northern Jacana *Jacana spinosa*

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- 233. Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*
- 234. Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*
- 235. Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*
- 236. Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*
- 237. Wandering Tattler *Heteroscelus incanus*
- 238. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*
- 239. Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*
- 240. Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

- 241. Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis*
- 242. Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus*
- 243. Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
- 244. Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*
- 245. Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*
- 246. Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*
- 247. Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
- 248. Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala*
- 249. Surfbird *Aphriza virgata*
- 250. Red Knot *Calidris canutus*
- 251. Sanderling *Calidris alba*
- 252. Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*
- 253. Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*
- 255. Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*
- 256. White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*
- 257. Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*
- 258. Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*
- 259. Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*
- 260. Rock Sandpiper *Calidris ptilocnemis*
- 261. Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
- 262. Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*
- 263. Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*
- 264. Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*
- 265. Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*
- 266. Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*
- 267. Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*
- 268. Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*
- 269. American Woodcock *Scolopax minor*
- 270. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*
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- 275. South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*
- 276. Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus*
- 278. Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*
- 280. Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus*
- 282. Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*
- 284. Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*
- 286. Little Gull *Larus minutus*
- 287. Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
- 288. Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*
- 289. Heermann's Gull *Larus heermanni*
- 290. Mew Gull *Larus canus*
- 292. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*
- 294. California Gull *Larus californicus*
- 296. Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*
- 298. Thayer's Gull *Larus thayeri*
- 300. Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*
- 302. Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*
- 304. Western Gull *Larus occidentalis*
- 306. Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*
- 308. Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*
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- 312. Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*
- 313. Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*
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- 324. Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

- 325. Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*
- 327. Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*
- 329. Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*
- 331. Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*
- 333. Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*
- 335. Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*
- 336. Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*
- 337. Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*
- 338. Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*
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- 341. Black Noddy *Anous minutus*
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- 343. Dovekie *Alle alle*
- 344. Common Murre *Uria aalge*
- 345. Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia*
- 346. Razorbill *Alca torda*
- 347. Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*
- 348. Pigeon Guillemot *Cepphus columba*
- 349. Marbled Murrelet *Brachyramphus marmoratus*
- 350. Kittlitz's Murrelet *Brachyramphus brevirostris*
- 351. Xantus's Murrelet *Synthliboramphus hypoleucus*
- 352. Craveri's Murrelet *Synthliboramphus craveri*
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- 355. Parakeet Auklet *Aethia psittacula*
- 356. Least Auklet *Aethia pusilla*
- 357. Whiskered Auklet *Aethia pygmaea*
- 358. Crested Auklet *Aethia cristatella*
- 359. Rhinoceros Auklet *Cerorhinca monocerata*
- 360. Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*
- 361. Horned Puffin *Fratercula corniculata*

362. Tufted Puffin *Fratercula cirrhata*

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363. Rock Dove *Columba livia*
364. White-crowned Pigeon *Columba leucocephala*
365. Red-billed Pigeon *Columba flavirostris*
366. Band-tailed Pigeon *Columba fasciata*
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369. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*
370. White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*
371. Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*
372. Inca Dove *Columbina inca*
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379. Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor*
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Owls-Family: Strigidae

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386. Eastern Screech-Owl *Otus asio*
387. Whiskered Screech-Owl *Otus trichopsis*
388. Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus*
389. Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*
390. Northern Hawk Owl *Surnia ulula*
391. Northern Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium gnoma*
392. Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum*
393. Elf Owl *Micrathene whitneyi*
394. Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia*
395. Spotted Owl *Strix occidentalis*
396. Barred Owl *Strix varia*
397. Great Gray Owl *Strix nebulosa*
398. Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*
399. Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*
400. Boreal Owl *Aegolius funereus*
401. Northern Saw-whet Owl *Aegolius acadicus*

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402. Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis*
403. Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor*
404. Antillean Nighthawk *Chordeiles gundlachii*

- 405. Common Pauraque *Nyctidromus albicollis*
- 406. Common Poorwill *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*
- 407. Chuck-will's-widow *Caprimulgus carolinensis*
- 408. Whip-poor-will *Caprimulgus vociferus*

SWIFTS & HUMMINGBIRDS-Order: Apodiformes

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- 410. Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*
- 411. Vaux's Swift *Chaetura vauxi*
- 412. White-throated Swift *Aeronautes saxatalis*

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- 413. Broad-billed Hummingbird *Cynanthus latirostris*
- 414. White-eared Hummingbird *Hylocharis leucotis*
- 415. Buff-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia yucatanensis*
- 416. Violet-crowned Hummingbird *Amazilia violiceps*
- 417. Blue-throated Hummingbird *Lampornis clemenciae*
- 418. Magnificent Hummingbird *Eugenes fulgens*
- 419. Lucifer Hummingbird *Calothorax lucifer*
- 420. Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*
- 421. Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri*
- 422. Anna's Hummingbird *Calypte anna*
- 423. Costa's Hummingbird *Calypte costae*
- 424. Calliope Hummingbird *Stellula calliope*
- 425. Broad-tailed Hummingbird *Selasphorus platycercus*
- 426. Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*
- 427. Allen's Hummingbird *Selasphorus sasin*

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429. Ringed Kingfisher *Ceryle torquata*
430. Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon*
431. Green Kingfisher *Chloroceryle americana*

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Family: Picidae

432. Lewis's Woodpecker *Melanerpes lewis*
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434. Acorn Woodpecker *Melanerpes formicivorus*
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440. Red-naped Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus nuchalis*
441. Red-breasted Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus ruber*
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443. Nuttall's Woodpecker *Picoides nuttallii*
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445. Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus*
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447. Red-cockaded Woodpecker *Picoides borealis*
448. White-headed Woodpecker *Picoides albolarvatus*
449. Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus*
450. Black-backed Woodpecker *Picoides arcticus*
451. Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*

- 452. Gilded Flicker *Colaptes chrysoides*
- 453. Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus*

PERCHING BIRDS-Order: Passeriformes

Flycatchers-Family: Tyrannidae

- 454. Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet *Camptostoma imberbe*
- 455. Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus cooperi*
- 456. Greater Pewee *Contopus pertinax*
- 457. Western Wood-Pewee *Contopus sordidulus*
- 458. Eastern Wood-Pewee *Contopus virens*
- 459. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher *Empidonax flaviventris*
- 460. Acadian Flycatcher *Empidonax virescens*
- 461. Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum*
- 462. Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*
- 463. Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*
- 464. Hammond's Flycatcher *Empidonax hammondii*
- 465. Gray Flycatcher *Empidonax wrightii*
- 466. Dusky Flycatcher *Empidonax oberholseri*
- 467. Pacific-slope Flycatcher *Empidonax difficilis*
- 468. Cordilleran Flycatcher *Empidonax occidentalis*
- 469. Buff-breasted Flycatcher *Empidonax fulvifrons*
- 470. Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans*
- 471. Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*
- 472. Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya*
- 473. Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus*
- 474. Dusky-capped Flycatcher *Myiarchus tuberculifer*
- 475. Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens*
- 476. Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus*
- 477. Brown-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus tyrannulus*
- 478. Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*
- 479. Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher *Myiodynastes luteiventris*
- 480. Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus*

- 481. Couch's Kingbird *Tyrannus couchii*
- 482. Cassin's Kingbird *Tyrannus vociferans*
- 483. Thick-billed Kingbird *Tyrannus crassirostris*
- 484. Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis*
- 485. Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*
- 486. Gray Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis*
- 487. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus*
- 488. Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana*
- 489. Rose-throated Becard *Pachyramphus aglaiae*

Shrikes-Family: Laniidae

- 490. Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*
- 491. Northern Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Vireos-Family: Vireonidae

- 492. White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*
- 493. Bell's Vireo *Vireo bellii*
- 494. Black-capped Vireo *Vireo atricapillus*
- 495. Gray Vireo *Vireo vicinior*
- 496. Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*
- 497. Plumbeous Vireo *Vireo plumbeus*
- 498. Cassin's Vireo *Vireo cassinii*
- 499. Blue-headed Vireo *Vireo solitarius*
- 500. Hutton's Vireo *Vireo huttoni*
- 501. Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*
- 502. Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*
- 503. Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*
- 504. Black-whiskered Vireo *Vireo altiloquus*

Jays & Crows-Family: Corvidae

- 505. Gray Jay *Perisoreus canadensis*
- 506. Steller's Jay *Cyanocitta stelleri*

- 507. Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata*
- 508. Green Jay *Cyanocorax yncas*
- 509. Brown Jay *Cyanocorax morio*
- 510. Florida Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma coerulescens*
- 511. Island Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma insularis*
- 512. Western Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma californica*
- 513. Mexican Jay *Aphelocoma ultramarina*
- 514. Pinyon Jay *Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*
- 515. Clark's Nutcracker *Nucifraga columbiana*
- 516. Black-billed Magpie *Pica hudsonia*
- 517. Yellow-billed Magpie *Pica nuttalli*
- 518. American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*
- 519. Northwestern Crow *Corvus caurinus*
- 520. Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus*
- 521. Chihuahuan Raven *Corvus cryptoleucus*
- 522. Common Raven *Corvus corax*

Larks-Family: Alaudidae

- 523. Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*
- 524. Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

Swallows-Family: Hirundinidae

- 525. Purple Martin *Progne subis*
- 526. Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*
- 527. Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*
- 528. Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*
- 529. Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia*
- 530. Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*
- 531. Cave Swallow *Petrochelidon fulva*
- 532. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Chickadees & Titmice-Family: Paridae

- 533. Carolina Chickadee *Poecile carolinensis*

- 534. Black-capped Chickadee *Poecile atricapilla*
- 535. Mountain Chickadee *Poecile gambeli*
- 536. Mexican Chickadee *Poecile sclateri*
- 537. Chestnut-backed Chickadee *Poecile rufescens*
- 538. Boreal Chickadee *Poecile hudsonica*
- 539. Gray-headed Chickadee *Poecile cincta*
- 540. Bridled Titmouse *Baeolophus wollweberi*
- 541. Oak Titmouse *Baeolophus inornatus*
- 542. Juniper Titmouse *Baeolophus ridgwayi*
- 543. Tufted Titmouse *Baeolophus bicolor*

Verdin-Family: Remizidae

- 544. Verdin *Auriparus flaviceps*

Bushtit-Family: Aegithalidae

- 545. Bushtit *Psaltriparus minimus*

Nuthatches-Family: Sittidae

- 546. Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*
- 547. White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis*
- 548. Pygmy Nuthatch *Sitta pygmaea*
- 549. Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla*

Creeper-Family: Certhiidae

- 550. Brown Creeper *Certhia americana*

Wrens-Family: Troglodytidae

- 551. Cactus Wren *Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*
- 552. Rock Wren *Salpinctes obsoletus*
- 553. Canyon Wren *Catherpes mexicanus*
- 554. Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus*
- 555. Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii*
- 556. House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*

- 557. Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*
- 558. Sedge Wren *Cistothorus platensis*
- 559. Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*

Dipper-Family: Cinclidae

- 560. American Dipper *Cinclus mexicanus*

Bulbul-Family: Pycnonotidae

- 561. Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*

Kinglets-Family: Regulidae

- 562. Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa*
- 563. Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*

Gnatcatchers-Family: Sylviidae

- 564. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*
- 565. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea*
- 566. California Gnatcatcher *Polioptila californica*
- 567. Black-tailed Gnatcatcher *Polioptila melanura*

Thrushes-Family: Turdidae

- 568. Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*
- 569. Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*
- 570. Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis*
- 571. Western Bluebird *Sialia mexicana*
- 572. Mountain Bluebird *Sialia currucoides*
- 573. Townsend's Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi*
- 574. Veery *Catharus fuscescens*
- 575. Gray-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*
- 576. Bicknell's Thrush *Catharus bicknelli*
- 577. Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*
- 578. Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*
- 579. Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*

- 580. Clay-colored Robin *Turdus grayi*
- 581. American Robin *Turdus migratorius*
- 582. Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius*

Wrentit-Family: Timaliidae

- 583. Wrentit *Chamaea fasciata*

Mockingbirds & Thrashers-Family: Mimidae

- 584. Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*
- 585. Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*
- 586. Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus*
- 587. Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*
- 588. Long-billed Thrasher *Toxostoma longirostre*
- 589. Bendire's Thrasher *Toxostoma bendirei*
- 590. Curve-billed Thrasher *Toxostoma curvirostre*
- 591. California Thrasher *Toxostoma redivivum*
- 592. Crissal Thrasher *Toxostoma crissale*
- 593. Le Conte's Thrasher *Toxostoma lecontei*

Starling-Family: Sturnidae

- 594. European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Wagtails & Pipits-Family: Motacillidae

- 595. Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
- 596. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
- 597. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*
- 598. American Pipit *Anthus rubescens*
- 599. Sprague's Pipit *Anthus spragueii*

Waxwings-Family: Bombycillidae

- 600. Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*
- 601. Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

Phainopepla-Family: Ptilonotidae

602. Phainopepla *Phainopepla nitens*

Olive Warbler-Family: Peucedramidae

603. Olive Warbler *Peucedramus taeniatus*

Warblers-Family: Parulidae

- 604. Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora pinus*
- 605. Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*
- 606. Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*
- 607. Orange-crowned Warbler *Vermivora celata*
- 608. Nashville Warbler *Vermivora ruficapilla*
- 609. Virginia's Warbler *Vermivora virginiae*
- 610. Colima Warbler *Vermivora crissalis*
- 611. Lucy's Warbler *Vermivora luciae*
- 612. Northern Parula *Parula americana*
- 613. Tropical Parula *Parula pitiayumi*
- 614. Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*
- 615. Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*
- 616. Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia*
- 617. Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina*
- 618. Black-throated Blue Warbler *Dendroica caerulescens*
- 619. Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*
- 621. Black-throated Gray Warbler *Dendroica nigrescens*
- 622. Golden-cheeked Warbler *Dendroica chrysoparia*
- 623. Black-throated Green Warbler *Dendroica virens*
- 624. Townsend's Warbler *Dendroica townsendi*
- 625. Hermit Warbler *Dendroica occidentalis*
- 626. Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca*
- 627. Yellow-throated Warbler *Dendroica dominica*
- 628. Grace's Warbler *Dendroica graciae*
- 629. Pine Warbler *Dendroica pinus*
- 630. Kirtland's Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii*

- 631. Prairie Warbler *Dendroica discolor*
- 632. Palm Warbler *Dendroica palmarum*
- 633. Bay-breasted Warbler *Dendroica castanea*
- 634. Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*
- 635. Cerulean Warbler *Dendroica cerulea*
- 636. Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*
- 637. American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*
- 638. Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea*
- 639. Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivorus*
- 640. Swainson's Warbler *Limnothlypis swainsonii*
- 641. Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus*
- 642. Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis*
- 643. Louisiana Waterthrush *Seiurus motacilla*
- 644. Kentucky Warbler *Oporornis formosus*
- 645. Connecticut Warbler *Oporornis agilis*
- 646. Mourning Warbler *Oporornis philadelphia*
- 647. MacGillivray's Warbler *Oporornis tolmiei*
- 648. Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*
- 649. Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina*
- 650. Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla*
- 651. Canada Warbler *Wilsonia canadensis*
- 652. Red-faced Warbler *Cardellina rubrifrons*
- 653. Painted Redstart *Myioborus pictus*
- 654. Slate-throated Redstart *Myioborus miniatus*
- 655. Yellow-breasted Chat *Icteria virens*

Tanagers-Family: Thraupidae

- 656. Hepatic Tanager *Piranga flava*
- 657. Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*
- 658. Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*
- 659. Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana*

Towhees & Sparrows-Family: Emberizidae

- 660. Olive Sparrow *Arremonops rufivirgatus*
- 661. Green-tailed Towhee *Pipilo chlorurus*
- 662. Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus*
- 663. Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*
- 664. Canyon Towhee *Pipilo fuscus*
- 665. California Towhee *Pipilo crissalis*
- 666. Abert's Towhee *Pipilo aberti*
- 667. White-collared Seedeater *Sporophila torqueola*
- 668. Rufous-winged Sparrow *Aimophila carpalis*
- 669. Cassin's Sparrow *Aimophila cassinii*
- 670. Bachman's Sparrow *Aimophila aestivalis*
- 671. Botteri's Sparrow *Aimophila botterii*
- 672. Rufous-crowned Sparrow *Aimophila ruficeps*
- 673. American Tree Sparrow *Spizella arborea*
- 674. Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina*
- 675. Clay-colored Sparrow *Spizella pallida*
- 676. Brewer's Sparrow *Spizella breweri*
- 677. Field Sparrow *Spizella pusilla*
- 678. Black-chinned Sparrow *Spizella atrogularis*
- 679. Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus*
- 680. Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*
- 681. Black-throated Sparrow *Amphispiza bilineata*
- 682. Sage Sparrow *Amphispiza belli*
- 683. Lark Bunting *Calamospiza melanocorys*
- 684. Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*
- 685. Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum*
- 686. Baird's Sparrow *Ammodramus bairdii*
- 687. Henslow's Sparrow *Ammodramus henslowii*
- 688. Le Conte's Sparrow *Ammodramus leconteii*
- 689. Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow *Ammodramus nelsoni*
- 690. Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow *Ammodramus caudacutus*
- 691. Seaside Sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus*

- 692. Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca*
- 693. Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*
- 694. Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii*
- 695. Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana*
- 696. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*
- 697. Harris's Sparrow *Zonotrichia querula*
- 698. White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*
- 699. Golden-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia atricapilla*
- 700. Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*
- 702. Yellow-eyed Junco *Junco phaeonotus*
- 703. McCown's Longspur *Calcarius mccownii*
- 704. Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*
- 705. Smith's Longspur *Calcarius pictus*
- 706. Chestnut-collared Longspur *Calcarius ornatus*
- 707. Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*
- 708. McKay's Bunting *Plectrophenax hyperboreus*

Grosbeaks & Buntings-Family: Cardinalidae

- 709. Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*
- 710. Pyrrhuloxia *Cardinalis sinuatus*
- 711. Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*
- 712. Black-headed Grosbeak *Pheucticus melanocephalus*
- 713. Blue Bunting *Cyanocompsa parellina*
- 714. Blue Grosbeak *Guiraca caerulea*
- 715. Lazuli Bunting *Passerina amoena*
- 716. Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*
- 717. Varied Bunting *Passerina versicolor*
- 718. Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris*
- 719. Dickcissel *Spiza americana*

Blackbirds & Orioles-Family: Icteridae

- 720. Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
- 721. Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*

- 722. Tricolored Blackbird *Agelaius tricolor*
- 723. Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*
- 724. Western Meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta*
- 725. Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*
- 726. Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus*
- 727. Brewer's Blackbird *Euphagus cyanocephalus*
- 728. Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula*
- 729. Boat-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus major*
- 730. Great-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus*
- 731. Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis*
- 732. Bronzed Cowbird *Molothrus aeneus*
- 733. Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*
- 734. Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius*
- 735. Hooded Oriole *Icterus cucullatus*
- 736. Bullock's Oriole *Icterus bullockii*
- 737. Spot-breasted Oriole *Icterus pectoralis*
- 738. Altamira Oriole *Icterus gularis*
- 739. Audubon's Oriole *Icterus graduacauda*
- 740. Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*
- 741. Scott's Oriole *Icterus parisorum*

Finches-Family: Fringillidae

- 742. Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte tephrocotis*
- 743. Black Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte atrata*
- 744. Brown-capped Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte australis*
- 745. Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*
- 746. Purple Finch *Carpodacus purpureus*
- 747. Cassin's Finch *Carpodacus cassinii*
- 748. House Finch *Carpodacus mexicanus*
- 749. Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*
- 750. White-winged Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*
- 751. Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*
- 752. Hoary Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*

- 753. Pine Siskin *Carduelis pinus*
- 754. Lesser Goldfinch *Carduelis psaltria*
- 755. Lawrence's Goldfinch *Carduelis lawrencei*
- 756. American Goldfinch *Carduelis tristis*
- 757. Evening Grosbeak *Coccothraustes vespertinus*

Old World Sparrows-Family: Passeridae

- 758. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
- 759. Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

760. GLOSSARY

Red-throated loon *Gavia stellata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches Wingspan: 44 inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic-plumaged adult, but with less well-defined face pattern

Dark bill

Large diving bird with long body that rides low in the water

Thin bill is angled upwards at tip and is held above the horizontal

Feet set far back on body, and trail behind body in flight

Upperwings wholly dark in flight

Adult alternate:

Gray head, chin, and side of neck

Red throat and striped nape

White chest and belly

Dark back

Adult basic:

Gray cap, forehead, nape, and back

White chin, throat, face, and belly

Gray nape not contrasting with white throat

Dark back speckled strongly with white

Similar species:

Cormorants have hooked bills. Western, Clark's, and Red-necked grebes have thinner variably yellow bills and show white in the wings in flight. Other species of loons can be quite similar in appearance. In alternate plumage the paler gray head differentiates it from the darker-headed Common and Yellow-billed loons while the red throat separates it from the Pacific Loon. In basic plumage it has much less contrast between the dark nape and white throat than the Pacific Loon, lacks the jagged border present on the Common Loon, and lacks the dark auricular of the Yellow-billed Loon. In all plumages the thin, upturned bill separates it from Pacific and Common loons while the bill is darker and smaller than that of the Yellow-billed Loon

Pacific loon *Gavia pacifica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18? inches Wingspan: 47? inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic-plumaged adult

Large diving bird with long body that rides low in the water

Large bill is straight at tip and is held horizontally

Feet set far back on body, and trail behind body in flight

Upperwings wholly dark in flight

Adult alternate:

Dark bill

Gray crown and nape

Black chin, dark purple throat, and sides of neck striped black and white

White chest and belly

Black back with white checkering and spotting

Adult basic:

Dark bill

Gray-brown cap, forehead, nape, and back

White chin, throat, and belly

Dark nape strongly contrasts with white throat

Sometimes has chin strap

Similar species:

Cormorants have hooked bills. Western, Clark's and Red-necked grebes have thinner variably yellow bills and show white in the wings in flight. Other species of loons can be quite similar in appearance. In alternate plumage the paler gray head differentiates it from the darker-headed Common and Yellow-billed Loons while the dark throat separates it from the Red-throated Loon. In basic plumage it has much more contrast between the dark nape and white throat than the other species. In all plumages it has a straighter, not upturned bill unlike the Red-throated and Yellow-billed Loons while the Common Loon has a larger bill. The Pacific Loon was formerly considered conspecific with the Arctic Loon. The Arctic Loon is very similar in appearance, has a green throat patch in breeding plumage, a larger bill and whiter flanks

Common loon *Gavia immer*

Identification Tips:

Length: 24 inches Wingspan: 58 inches

Sexes similar

Large diving bird with long body that rides low in the water

Large bill is straight, tapers to a point, and is held horizontally

Feet set far back on body, and trail behind body in flight

Upperwings wholly dark in flight

Adult alternate:

Black bill

Black head

Black neck with white markings

White chest and belly

Black back with white checkering and spotting

Adult basic:

Pale gray bill

Gray-brown cap, forehead, nape, hindneck and back

White face, eye ring, chin, throat, foreneck and belly

Jagged border between white foreneck and dark hindneck

Immature:

Like basic-plumaged adult but often with paler bill and white scalloping on back

Similar species:

Cormorants have hooked bills. Western, Clark's and Red-necked Grebes have thinner bills marked with yellow and show white in the wings in flight. Red-throated Loon has a thinner, upturned bill that it carries above horizontal. In basic and immature plumages its back is spangled with white spots and its head and neck are pale gray, with a straighter line of division with the white foreneck. Pacific Loon has a shorter, thinner bill, a sharp line dividing the pale foreneck and dark hindneck and no white around the eye. The rare Yellow-billed Loon is similar in all plumages, but has a bill that is beveled upwards at the tip and a blockier head, and is entirely yellow beyond the gonys. In basic and immature plumages, the head and hindneck are paler with a darker spot to the auriculars, and back has more pattern

Yellow-billed loon *Gavia adamsii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 25 inches Wingspan: 60 inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic-plumaged adult

Large diving bird with long body that rides low in the water

Large bill is beveled upwards at tip and is held slightly above horizontal

Feet set far back on body, and trail behind body in flight

Upperwings wholly dark in flight

Adult alternate:

Yellow bill

Black head

Black neck with white markings

White chest and belly

Black back with white checkering and spotting

Adult basic:

Pale bill

Gray-brown cap, forehead, nape, hindneck, and back

White face, eye ring, chin, throat, foreneck, and belly

Dark auricular spot

Similar species:

Cormorants have hooked bills. Western, Clark's, and Red-necked grebes have thinner bills and show white in the wings in flight. Red-throated Loon has a thinner, upturned bill. In basic and immature plumages its back is spangled with white spots and its head and neck are pale gray, with a straighter line of division with the white foreneck. Pacific Loon has a shorter, thinner bill, a sharp line dividing the pale foreneck, and dark hindneck and no white around the eye. The Common Loon is similar in all plumages, but has a bill that is straight at the tip and a less blocky head, and an entirely dark culmen beyond the gonys. In basic and immature plumages, the Common Loon's head and hindneck are darker without a darker spot to the auriculars, and back has less pattern

Least grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches

Sexes similar

Small, stocky-bodied grebe with a short, thin bill

Yellow eyes

Dark plumage, darker on the crown and back

White undertail coverts

Feet set far back on body and trail awkwardly behind body in flight

Adult alternate:

Black crown, nape, chin, and back

Dark bill

Adult basic:

Pale bill

White chin

Similar Species:

Somewhat similar Pied-billed Grebe has a thicker bill and brown crown, nape and back and dark eyes. A dark winter-plumaged Eared Grebe would stand out as larger, with a white breast and foreneck, a red eye, and a prominent crest. Other grebes are larger and have quite different plumage

Pied-billed grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches

Sexes similar

Small, stocky-bodied grebe with a short, thick bill

Brown plumage, darker on the crown and back

White undertail coverts

Feet set far back on body and trail awkwardly behind body in flight

Adult alternate:

Black ring around horn-colored bill

Whitish throat

Adult basic:

Horn-colored bill without black ring

Brown throat

Juvenile:

Black and white striping about head

Similar Species:

All other grebes have thinner bills and quite different plumage

Horned grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9.5 inches Wingspan: 24 inches

Sexes similar

Small, stocky-bodied grebe with a short, thin bill

Black bill, often with a pale tip

Blocky head, with a peak at the rearmost portion of the head

Feet set far back on body and trail awkwardly behind body in flight

White secondaries visible in flight

Adult alternate:

Head black with a golden stripe of feathers extending from eye to back of head

Reddish neck and flanks

Dark back

White belly

Adult basic:

Black cap, hindneck, and back

White face, foreneck, flanks, and belly

Similar Species:

Pied-billed Grebe has thick, horn-colored bill and brown plumage. Red-necked Grebe is much larger, has a longer bill that is yellow at the base and much less contrasty plumage. Eared Grebe is quite similar but always has a peak or topknot at the center of the crown and a thinner bill that is beveled upwards at the tip. In basic plumage it has a darker face with a contrasting white chin, in alternate plumage it is easily distinguished by the golden ray of feathers radiating from behind the eye, and the black neck. Birds in transition between basic and alternate plumage are best distinguished by structural features, as the plumage can be quite variable

Red-necked grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 32 inches

Sexes similar

A large, long-necked grebe with a long bill

Bill yellow at the base (most evident on breeding adults)

White secondaries and leading edge of wing

Feet set far back on body

Adult alternate:

Black cap

Reddish neck

Pale gray face

Blackish hindneck and back

Whitish flanks and belly

Adult basic:

Dark cap, hindneck and back

Dark gray face and foreneck, white crescent on cheek

Finger of white extending upwards at the rear of the head

Whitish flanks and belly

Juvenile:

Black and white striping on head and upper neck

Immature basic:

Like adult basic, but face pattern less distinct

Similar species:

Loons are much larger with longer bodies and larger, darker bills. Horned and Eared Grebes are smaller with much shorter bills that are never yellow at the base. The grayish face and neck of Red-necked Grebe is distinctive in winter, as is the small finger of white extending upwards at the rear of the head. Smaller than Western Grebe

Eared grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches Wingspan: 23 inches

Sexes similar

Small, stocky-bodied grebe with short, thin bill with lower mandible beveled upwards at the tip

Black bill with no pale tip

Feet set far back on body and trail awkwardly behind body in flight

Head triangular, with a peak towards the center of the head

White secondaries visible in flight

Adult alternate:

Black head with a golden ray of feathers radiating from behind eye

Black neck and back

Reddish flanks

Adult basic:

Slate-gray head, face, hindneck and back

White chin contrasts with dark face and dusky foreneck

Whitish flanks and belly

Similar species:

Pied-billed Grebe has thick, horn-colored bill and brown plumage. Red-necked Grebe is much larger, and has a longer bill that is yellow at the base. Horned Grebe is similar, but has a straighter bill without an uptilt at the tip and a blockier head without a peak at the center of the crown. In basic plumage Horned Grebe has a white face, while in alternate plumage it is separated by the golden eyeline and reddish neck. Birds in transition between basic and alternate plumage are best distinguished by structural features, as the plumage can be quite variable

Western grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18? inches Wingspan: 40? inches

Sexes similar

A large, long-necked grebe with a long bill

Bill greenish-yellow

Red eye

Black crown, face, and nape

Black crown includes eye

Dark blackish-brown back and wings

White chin, throat, and belly

White secondaries

Feet set far back on body

Similar species:

Loons are larger with longer bodies and larger, darker bills. Horned and Eared Grebes are smaller with much shorter bills that are never greenish-yellow. Red-necked Grebe is smaller without the bold black and white neck pattern. The formerly conspecific Clark's Grebe is very similar but has a bright yellow bill. The dark crown of the Western Grebe extends below the eye, in the Clark's it is above the eye. The two species have distinctive calls: Clark's gives a simple kreeet while the Western gives a doubled note. Hybridization is known so atypical birds should be studied well for exact bill color and face pattern

Clark's grebe *Aechmophorus clarkii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18? inches Wingspan: 40? inches
Sexes similar
A large, long-necked grebe with a long bill
Bill yellow
Red eye
Black crown and nape
White chin, throat, face, and belly
White face includes eye
Dark blackish-brown back and wings
White secondaries
Feet set far back on body

Similar species:

Loons are larger with longer bodies and larger, darker bills. Horned and Eared Grebes are smaller with much shorter bills that are never yellow. Red-necked Grebe is smaller without the bold black and white neck pattern. The formerly conspecific Westerns Grebe is very similar but has a greener bill. The dark crown of the Western Grebe includes the eye, whereas in the Clark's it does not. The two species have distinctive calls: Clark's give a single kreeet while the Western gives a doubled note. Hybridization is known go atypical birds should be studied well for exact bill color and face pattern

Laysan albatross *Phoebastria immutabilis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 28 inches Wingspan: 85 inches

Sexes similar

Large seafaring bird with extremely long wings

White head, body, undertail coverts, and rump

Upperwings and back dark

Black and white patterning on underwings

Bill and feet pinkish

Similar species:

Similarly pelagic shearwaters and petrels are smaller with shorter wings. Black-footed Albatross has a dark body and head. Other albatross species are rarer and have different patterning on the underwings

Black-footed albatross *Phoebastria nigripes*

Identification Tips:

Length: 28 inches Wingspan: 80 inches

Sexes similar

Large seafaring bird with extremely long wings

Dark gray bill, head, body, wings, and legs

Undertail coverts and underside of flight feathers somewhat pale

Adult:

White at base of bill

Sometimes has white on belly

Immature:

Like adult but less white on bill and belly

Similar species:

Similarly pelagic shearwaters and petrels are smaller with shorter wings. Also dark, but rare, first-year Short-tailed Albatross has pink bill and legs. Other albatross species have white bodies and heads

Northern fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 42 inches
Sexes similar
Stocky pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Large shearwater
Thick yellow bill with tube on top
Rapid wingbeats
Glides on stiff wings

Light morph

White head and underparts
Gray back, upperwings, rump, and tail
White flash in primaries visible from above
Mostly white underwings

Gray morph

Gray head, body, wings, and tail
Paler underside of flight feathers and upper side of primaries
Intermediate morph also occurs

Similar species:

Gulls flap their wings more slowly and smoothly and lack the tube on top of the bill.
Similarly pelagic shearwaters and petrels are slimmer with more distinct patterning

Mottled petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11.5 inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Short dark bill with tube on top

Dark eye patch

Gray belly and upperparts

Upperparts sometimes mottled with white

Whitish throat and breast

White underwing with dark bar across coverts

Rapid flight

Similar species:

At close range, the dark belly and dark bar on underwing coverts are distinctive. From a distance, it can be told from shearwaters by its faster, more bounding flight

Black-capped petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 35 inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Dark bill with tube on top

White forehead, collar and rump

Dark upperparts

White underparts

Long wings and tail

White underwing with dark border and dark bar across coverts

Flight alternates flaps with long glides

Similar species:

Audubon's and Manx Shearwaters lack white collar and rump. Larger Greater Shearwater lacks white forehead and has a duller underwing pattern

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 19 inches Wingspan: 44 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Large shearwater
Yellow bill with tube on top
White underparts
Brownish upperparts
Slow wingbeats

Similar species:

Greater Shearwater has a faster wingbeat and a darker bill, belly and cap. Audubon's Shearwater is much smaller with a dark bill. Immature gulls are superficially similar but can be separated at great distances by their different flight styles. Shearwaters fly closer to the surface of the water, often disappearing behind swells, alternating flaps with long glides on downcurved wings

Pink-footed Shearwater *Puffinus creatopus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 43 inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Large shearwater

Pink bill with tube on top

Pink feet

White belly with dark chest and undertail coverts

Dark upperparts

Underwings whitish with irregular dark borders

Upperwings dark and paler on the inner wings

Slow wingbeats

Similar species:

Black-vented Shearwater is much smaller with a faster wingbeat. Buller's Shearwater is much whiter underneath with a different upperwing pattern. Rare Streaked Shearwater is paler below with a different head pattern. At a distance, Sooty Shearwaters are smaller with faster wingbeats. Immature gulls are superficially similar but can be separated at great distances by their different flight styles. Shearwaters fly closer to the surface of the water, often disappearing behind swells, alternating flaps with long glides on downcurved wings

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 43 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Large shearwater
Pinkish bill with tube on top
Flesh-colored feet
All dark plumage

Similar species:

Similarly dark Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters have dark bills and feet and faster wingbeats. Immature gulls are superficially similar but can be separated at great distances by their different flight styles. Shearwaters fly closer to the surface of the water, often disappearing behind swells, alternating flaps with long glides on downcurved wings

Greater shearwater *Puffinus gravis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 45 inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Large shearwater

Dark bill with tube on top

Dark brown cap

Grayish-brown upperparts

White uppertail coverts

White underparts with indistinct brownish belly

Rapid wingbeats

Glides on stiff wings

Similar species:

Gulls flap their wings more slowly and smoothly and lack the tube on top of the bill.

Northern Fulmar's plumage does not have as much contrast and build is stockier. Manx

Shearwater is smaller with faster wingbeats. Cory's Shearwater lacks the contrasting dark cap and the brownish belly and has a pale bill

Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 38 inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Medium to large shearwater

White underparts and underwings

Gray upperparts with dark outer wing and diagonal bar across inner wing

Dark cap

Similar species:

Smaller Black-vented Shearwater has plain upperwings. Larger Pink-footed Shearwater has darker underparts and plainer upperwings. Mottled Petrel is smaller with a dark belly and a different underwing pattern. Immature gulls are superficially similar but can be separated at great distances by their different flight styles. Shearwaters fly closer to the surface of the water, often disappearing behind swells, alternating flaps with long glides on downcurved wings

Sooty shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 43 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Large shearwater
Dark bill with tube on top
Dark gray head, body and feet
Pale underwings
Rapid wingbeats
Glides on stiff wings

Similar species:

Gulls are not as gray and flap their wings more slowly and smoothly and lack the tube on top of the bill. The gray morph of the Northern Fulmar is stockier and has a yellow bill. Flesh-footed Shearwater has pink legs and bill. Short-tailed Shearwater is very similar but is somewhat smaller with a steeper forehead.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 39 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Medium-size shearwater
Dark plumage
Gray underwings
Dark bill and feet
Steep forehead
Sometimes has pale chin

Similar species:

Extremely similar and much more common Sooty Shearwater has a less rounded head with a more gradual slope to the forehead. Sometimes Sooty Shearwaters have paler wing linings and appear slightly larger. Flesh-footed Shearwater has a pale bill and feet. Dark Northern Fulmars are much stockier with yellow bills. Immature gulls are superficially similar but can be separated at great distances by their different flight styles. Shearwaters fly closer to the surface of the water, often disappearing behind swells, alternating flaps with long glides on downcurved wings

Manx shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13? inches Wingspan: 32? inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Medium to small shearwater

Dark bill with tube on top

Very dark upperparts

White underparts, underwings, and undertail coverts

Rapid wingbeats

Glides on stiff wings

Similar species:

Gulls are not as contrastingly black and white and flap their wings more slowly and smoothly and lack the tube on top of the bill. Greater and Cory's Shearwaters are larger. Audubon's Shearwater has browner upperparts, dark undertail coverts and darker undersides of primaries. The very rare Little Shearwater is smaller with a whiter face and faster wingbeats. Formerly conspecific with the Black-vented Shearwater. The Black-vented Shearwater has dark undertail coverts

Black-vented Shearwater *Puffinus opisthomelas*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13? inches Wingspan: 32? inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Often seen from shore

Medium-size shearwater

Brown upperparts not contrasting with white underparts

Brown undertail coverts

Underwings white with brown trailing edge

Similar species:

Manx Shearwater has white undertail coverts and more contrast between the upperparts and the underparts. Pink-footed Shearwater is larger with a darker chest and darker underwings. Immature gulls are superficially similar but can be separated at great distances by their different flight styles. Shearwaters fly closer to the surface of the water, often disappearing behind swells, alternating flaps with long glides on downcurved wings

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches Wingspan: 26 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Medium-size shearwater
Brown upperparts
White underparts
Dark undertail coverts
Long tail
Underwings white with dark border
Rapid wingbeats

Similar species:

Manx Shearwater has white undertail coverts and a shorter tail. Greater Shearwater is larger with a white rump and dark belly. Immature gulls are superficially similar but can be separated at great distances by their different flight styles. Shearwaters fly closer to the surface of the water, often disappearing behind swells, alternating flaps with long glides on downcurved wings

Wilson's storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches Wingspan: 16 inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Medium to small storm-petrel

Dark bill with tube on top

Very dark plumage

White rump patch, undertail coverts, and flank patch

Gray carpal bar

Yellow feet sometimes protrude beyond squared or rounded tail

Often patters its feet on water surface

Size and flight style reminiscent of Purple Martin

Similar species:

Purple Martin is vaguely similar but lacks the white rump patch and doesn't usually occupy the same habitat. Shearwaters are much larger. Other storm petrels are very similar. Black, Ashy, and Least storm-petrels lack the white rump. Wedge-rumped storm-petrel is smaller with a larger rump patch. Band-rumped and Leach's storm petrels are larger with different flight styles and their feet don't protrude beyond the end of their tails. Leach's has a forked tail and a divided or absent rump patch. Band-rumped has a thinner rump patch

Fork-tailed storm-petrel *Oceanodroma furcata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches Wingspan: 18 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Medium to large storm-petrel
Dark bill with tube on top
Pale gray plumage
Dark ear patch
Underwings partly dark
Forked tail

Similar species:

Shearwaters are much larger. Other storm petrels are much darker.

Leach's storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches Wingspan: 19 inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Medium-sized storm-petrel

Dark bill with tube on top

Very dark plumage

Gray carpal bar

White rump patch divided or missing(Southern California)

Forked tail

Deep wingbeats

Flight style reminiscent of nighthawk

Similar species:

Most likely to be confused with other storm petrels. Black, Ashy, and Least have dark rumps. Smaller Wilson's has a whiter rump, squared tail, yellow feet often protruding beyond tail, and a different flight style. Band-rumped has an undivided rump patch and slightly different flight style- more direct with shearwater-like glides

Ashy storm-petrel *Oceanodroma homochroa*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches Wingspan: 16 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Medium-sized storm-petrel
Dark bill with tube on top
Dark plumage
Somewhat paler underwings
Dark rump
Forked tail
Shallow wingbeats

Similar species:

Most likely to be confused with other storm petrels. Black is larger with deeper wingbeats. Least is smaller with more rapid wingbeats and a wedge-shaped tail. Other species have white rumps

Band-rumped storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches Wingspan: 18 inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Large-sized storm-petrel

Dark bill with tube on top

Dark plumage

Narrow, rectangular, white rump patch

Slightly forked tail

Shallow wingbeats and glides like a shearwater

Similar species:

Most likely to be confused with other storm petrels. Larger than Wilson's with less extensive white on rump and undertail coverts. Dark feet do not extend beyond tail. Very similar to Leach's but rump patch not divided (difficult to see in field) and flight more direct with shallower wingbeats and shearwater- like glides.

Black storm-petrel *Oceanodroma melania*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches Wingspan: 18 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Large-sized storm-petrel
Dark bill with tube on top
Dark plumage
Dark rump
Forked tail
Deep, steady wingbeats

Similar species:

Most likely to be confused with other storm petrels. Ashy is smaller with shallower wingbeats. Least is much smaller with more rapid wingbeats and a wedge-shaped tail. Other species have white rumps.

Least storm-petrel *Oceanodroma microsoma*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches Wingspan: 13 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Small-sized storm-petrel
Dark bill with tube on top
Dark plumage
Dark rump
Wedge-shaped tail
Deep, rapid wingbeats

Similar species:

Most likely to be confused with other storm petrels. Ashy is larger with shallower wingbeats. Black is much larger with slower wingbeats and a forked tail. Other species have white rumps

White-tailed tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 26 inches Wingspan: 37 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Tern-sized
White head and body
Outer primaries black
Dark eye patch

Adult

Long white tail streamers
Yellow to orange bill
Black diagonal bar on upperside of inner wing

Immature

Lacks tail streamers
Yellow bill
Finely barred back

Similar species:

Adult Red-billed Tropicbird is larger with a slower wingbeat and lacks black patches on upperwing. Immature Red-billed has less distinct barring on the back. Adult Red-tailed Tropicbird also lacks the black patches on the upperwing

Red-billed tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 34 inches Wingspan: 44 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Tern-sized
White head and body
Finely barred back
Outer primaries black
Dark eye patch sometimes extends across nape

Adult

Long white tail streamers
Red bill

Immature

Lacks tail streamers
Yellow bill

Similar species:

Adult Red-billed Tropicbird is larger than White-tailed Tropicbird with a slower wingbeat and lacks black patches on upperwing. Immature Red-billed has less distinct barring on the back. Adult Red-tailed Tropicbird lacks barring on the back. Immature Red-tailed has less black on the nape and in the primaries.

Red-tailed tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Tern-sized

White head and body

Adult

Long red tail streamers

Red bill

Immature

Lacks tail streamers

Black changing to yellow bill

Similar species:

Adult Red-tailed Tropicbird lacks barring on upperparts of the Red-billed Tropicbird and the black patches of the White-tailed Tropicbird. The immature Red-tailed is similar to the immature Red-billed but lacks black nape and has less black in the primaries

Masked booby *Sula dactylatra*

Identification Tips:

Length: 27? inches Wingspan: 68? inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Large bird that dives for fish from air

Takes 2 to 3 years to reach adult plumage

Adult

White head, body and wing coverts

Dark primaries, secondaries, and tail

Dark patches on back

Dark mask

Large, greenish to pale yellow, pointed bill

Grayish legs and feet

Immature

Dark brownish head and upperparts separated by light collar (most populations)

Underparts white with U-shaped line between throat and breast

Similar species:

The very similar adult Nazca Booby has an orange, not yellow, bill. Adult Masked Booby can be separated from other black and white boobies by the entirely dark secondaries and dark tail. Immature boobies are very difficult to identify. Brown and Red-footed have darker bellies. Blue-footed has a white rump patch and a more horizontal demarcation between the dark upper breast and the white belly. Northern Gannets tend to lack the white collar but at a distance may be inseparable. Immature Nazca is very similar to immature Masked but may have more white in the central rectrices, lack or have an ill-defined light collar, appear to have a distinctly gray back and may acquire some adult color to the bill

Nazca booby *Sula granti*

Identification Tips:

Length: 27? inches Wingspan: 68? inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Large bird that dives for fish from air
Takes 2 to 3 years to reach adult plumage
Recently separated from Masked Booby
May be rare stray to California

Adult

White head, body and wing coverts
Dark primaries and secondaries
Black tail often with central white feathers
Dark patches on back
Dark mask
Large, orange, pointed bill
Olive to gray legs and feet

Immature

Dark head and upperparts usually not separated by light collar
Head often brown while back is often gray
Underparts white with U-shaped line between throat and breast

Similar species:

Adult Masked Booby has a yellow, not orange, bill. Adult Nazca Booby can be separated from other black and white boobies by the entirely dark secondaries. Immature boobies are very difficult to identify. Brown and Red-footed have darker bellies. Blue-footed has a white rump patch and a more horizontal demarcation between the dark upper breast and the white belly. Northern Gannets tend to lack the white collar but at a distance may be inseparable. Immature Nazca is very similar to immature Masked but may have more white in the central rectrices, lack or have an ill-defined light collar, appear to have a distinctly gray back and may acquire some adult color to the bill

Blue-footed booby *Sula nebouxii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 26 inches Wingspan: 64 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Large bird that dives for fish from air
Takes 2 to 3 years to reach adult plumage

Adult

Pale, streaked head
Dark mantle with white patches on nape and rump
White underparts
Dark tail sometimes with white patch
Large, dark, pointed bill
Blue legs and feet

Immature

Plumage similar to adult
Underparts white with straight line between breast and belly

Similar species:

At close range, the blue legs and feet are diagnostic. Immature boobies of other species are very similar to Blue-footed Boobies. Brown and Red-footed boobies have darker bellies. Masked Booby lacks the pale rump patch and has a more U-shaped demarcation between the dark upper breast and the white belly. Northern Gannets tend to lack the white patches on the nape and rump but at a distance may be inseparable

Brown booby *Sula leucogaster*

Identification Tips:

Length: 23 inches Wingspan: 56 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Large bird that dives for fish from air
Takes 2 to 3 years to reach adult plumage

Adult

Dark head, breast, mantle, and tail
White belly cleanly separated from dark breast
Underwings white with dark border
Large, yellow, pointed bill
Yellow legs and feet

Immature

Plumage similar to adult but belly is slightly paler than breast

Similar species:

Adults are quite distinctive with their bold dark head and breast cleanly separated from the white belly. Immature boobies of other species are very similar to Brown Boobies. Young Brown Boobies have darker bellies than Masked and Blue-footed Boobies. As Brown Boobies age, the distinctive breast band becomes more apparent. Young Red-footed Boobies are also quite dark but are smaller, and have even darker bellies and underwings. First-year gannets are larger and lack the breast demarcation line

Red-footed booby *Sula sula*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Sexes similar

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Large bird that dives for fish from air

Takes 2 to 3 years to reach adult plumage

Smallest booby

Adult-white morph

White head, body and tail

Dark primaries and outer secondaries

Underwings white with dark border

Large, gray, pointed bill

Red legs and feet

Pink at base of bill

Adult-dark morph

Brown head and body

Darker wings

White rump, undertail coverts and tail

Large, gray, pointed bill

Red legs and feet

Pink at base of bill

Immature

Dark brown plumage

Dark feet

Similar species:

The Red-footed Booby is smaller and faster-flying than the other boobies. Adults have diagnostic red feet and pink-based bills. When flying, adults of the white morph are similar to the Masked Booby but have white tails (usually) and white inner secondaries. The combination of the brown body plumage and the white rump and tail is characteristic of the dark morph Red-footed Booby. Immature Red-footed Boobies are obviously darker than all but the immature Brown Booby but lack the underwing pattern and breast demarcation line

Northern gannet *Morus bassanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 31 inches Wingspan: 70 inches
Sexes similar
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Large bird that dives for fish from air
Takes 4 years to reach adult plumage
Largest booby

Adult

White head, body, tail, and inner wings
Yellowish wash on head
Black outer wing
Large, gray, pointed bill
Gray legs and feet

Immature

Dark brown plumage
White patches appearing as the bird ages

Similar species:

The Northern Gannet is by far the most common booby from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. It is identifiable at great distances by its plunge-diving behavior and large size. The adults are easy to separate from other white boobies by the lack of black on the inner wings. Immatures can be confused with other immature boobies but typically lack white patches on the rump or upper back until they also have white heads.

American white pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

Identification Tips:

Length: 50 inches Wingspan: 110 inches

Sexes similar

Huge, white bird with black primaries and outer secondaries

Flies with neck tucked

Does not plunge into water from the air as Brown Pelicans do but feeds while swimming

Adult:

Long, orange bill with a pouch

Short orange legs and feet

Immature:

Brown-gray mottling about wing coverts

Bill gray to flesh-colored

Similar species:

Unmistakable at rest. Wood Stork has black flight feathers and could be mistaken at a distance, but note dark, unfeathered head and neck, which is extended in flight.

Whooping Crane, Northern Gannet and Snow and Ross' Geese have black primaries and could also be confused in flight at a distance, but they all lack black secondaries

Brown pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 41 inches Wingspan: 90 inches

Sexes similar

Huge, dark bird

Long bill with a pouch, dark on Atlantic/Gulf coasts; bill paler along Pacific coast, becomes yellow during breeding season

Flies with neck tucked

Plunges from great heights into water to catch fish

Adult alternate:

White foreneck and head with yellow crown

Chestnut neck and nape

Gray-brown body plumage with slightly darker flight feathers

Adult basic:

Yellowish crown

White head and neck

Gray-brown body plumage with slightly darker flight feathers

Immature:

Dark brown overall, gradually acquiring adult plumage over three years

Similar species:

None

Brandt's cormorant *Phalacrocorax penicillatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 29 inches Wingspan: 50 inches

Sexes similar

Large, dark waterbird with a long, hooked bill and long tail

Long, thin neck

Gular region blue with yellowish lower border

Often perches with wings spread to dry them

Adult:

Entirely dark plumage except for thin, white plumes on neck

Immature:

Very dark plumage

Similar species:

Loons are similar on the water, but lack hooked bills. Most loons hold their bills level while swimming while cormorants hold theirs angled upwards. All adult cormorant species in the U.S. are separable by the shape and color of the gular areas. No other species has a blue gular region with a yellowish border. The Brandt's Cormorant shares its Pacific Coast range with the Double-crested and Pelagic Cormorants. Adult Double-crested Cormorants have orange gular regions and Pelagics have red ones. Immature Double-crested is paler underparts and Pelagic is darker. The Pelagic Cormorant is noticeably smaller and slimmer.

Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches Wingspan: 40 inches

Sexes similar

Large, dark waterbird with a long, hooked bill and long tail

Long, thin neck

Gular region pointed and dull yellow

Thin, pale border to gular region

Often perches with wings spread to dry them

Formerly called Olivaceous Cormorant

Adult:

Entirely dark plumage

Border to gular region becomes whiter in breeding season

Immature:

Dull brownish upperparts

Paler underparts

Similar species:

Loons are similar on the water, but lack hooked bills. Most loons hold their bills level while swimming while cormorants hold theirs angled upwards. Anhinga has a long, pointed bill and a much longer tail. All adult cormorant species in the U.S. are separable by the shape and color of the gular areas. No other species has a dull yellow gular region bordered by a thin white line. Double-crested Cormorants are quite similar to Neotropic Cormorants, especially the immatures but note that the smaller Neotropic has a duller, pointed gular region, a longer tail, and a slimmer build.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 27 inches Wingspan: 50 inches

Sexes similar

Large, dark waterbird with a long, hooked bill and long tail

Long, thin neck

Gular area squared off and orange, extending straight down across throat

Orange lores

Often perches with wings spread to dry them

Adult:

Entirely black plumage

Small white plumes on head during breeding season

Immature:

Pale throat and chest darkening below to dark belly; some individuals are entirely pale underneath

Brownish back and upperwings

Similar species:

Loons are similar on the water, but lack hooked bills. Anhinga has a long, pointed bill and a much longer tail. All adult cormorant species in the U.S. are separable by the shape and color of the gular areas. No other species has orange lores and gular region that does not form a point at the gape. Neotropical Cormorant can be similar but is slimmer and longer-tailed, and has a differently shaped gular area. Great Cormorant is also similar but has a yellowish, pointed gular area surrounded with white as an adult. Immatures are dark-chested and pale bellied, unlike Double-crested.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Identification Tips:

Length: 30 inches Wingspan: 60 inches

Sexes similar

Large, dark waterbird with a long, hooked bill and long tail

Long, thin neck

Gular area pointed and yellow

White chin patch

Often perches with wings spread to dry them

Adult:

Entirely black plumage

White flank patch in breeding season

Second-year bird like adult but browner

Immature:

Pale belly with dark chest, neck and flanks

Brownish back and upperwings

Similar species:

Loons are similar on the water, but lack hooked bills. Most loons hold their bills level while swimming while cormorants hold theirs angled upwards. Anhinga has a long, pointed bill and a much longer tail. All adult cormorant species in the U.S. are separable by the shape and color of the gular areas. No other species has a yellow gular region bordered by a white chin patch. Double-crested Cormorants have straight orange gular areas that are dark-bordered. Immature Double-crested have white chests and dark bellies, the opposite of the immature Great Cormorant. At a distance, Great Cormorants appear larger, with heavier bills than Double-Crested Cormorants

Red-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax urile*

Identification Tips:

Length: 28 inches Wingspan: 48 inches

Sexes similar

Large, dark waterbird with a long, hooked bill and long tail

Long, thin neck

Gular region is blue and bordered bright red onto the forehead

Often perches with wings spread to dry them

Adult:

Entirely dark plumage except for white flank patch

Two crests on head

Thin, white plumes on neck

Bill is partially yellow

Immature:

Very dark plumage

Similar species:

Loons are similar on the water, but lack hooked bills. Most loons hold their bills level while swimming while cormorants hold theirs angled upwards. All adult cormorant species in the U.S. are separable by the shape and color of the gular areas. No other species has a small blue gular region with a bright red forehead. The Red-faced Cormorant overlaps the range of the Pelagic Cormorant only in Alaska. In the breeding season, the Red-faced Cormorant has a red forehead and a pale bill. Other cormorants lack the white flank patch

Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches Wingspan: 40 inches

Sexes similar

Large, dark waterbird with a long, hooked bill and long tail

Long, thin neck

Gular region red

Often perches with wings spread to dry them

Adult:

Entirely dark plumage except for white flank patch

Two crests on head

Thin, white plumes on neck

Immature:

Very dark plumage

Similar species:

Loons are similar on the water, but lack hooked bills. Most loons hold their bills level while swimming while cormorants hold theirs angled upwards. All adult cormorant species in the U.S. are separable by the shape and color of the gular areas. No other species has a small red gular region. The Pelagic Cormorant shares its Pacific Coast range with the Double-crested and Brandt's Cormorants. Adult Double-crested Cormorants have orange gular regions and Brandt's have yellow-bordered blue ones. Immature Double-crested and Brandt's have paler underparts than the Pelagics. The Pelagic Cormorant is noticeably smaller and slimmer than the other species. The Red-faced Cormorant overlaps the range of the Pelagic Cormorant only in Alaska. In the breeding season, the Red-faced Cormorant has a red forehead and a pale bill

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*

Identification Tips:

Length: 28 inches Wingspan: 47 inches
Large, dark waterbird with long, loosely-jointed tail
Very long, thin neck
Long, pointed bill
Often perches with wings spread to dry them
Often swims with just head and neck above surface
May soar for extended periods, like a hawk

Adult male:

Black head, neck and body with white plumes and edgings on wing coverts

Adult female:

Tan head and neck
Black body with white plumes and edgings on wing coverts

Similar species:

Cormorants have hooked bills, and shorter tails and necks.

Magnificent frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 35 inches Wingspan: 90 inches

Very large

Chases other birds to steal their prey

Effortlessly glides on long, pointed wings and long, forked tail

Long, hooked bill

Adult male

Entirely black plumage

Red, inflatable throat sac

Adult female

White breast

Remainder of plumage black

Immature

White head and breast

Remainder of plumage black

Similar species:

With its huge size, long, pointed wings and forked tail the frigatebird is instantly recognizable even at long distances. It is most often seen soaring over coastal areas

American bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 23 inches Wingspan: 45 inches

Medium-sized wading bird

Dark brown upperparts

Underparts streaked brown and white

Black malar streak

Yellow bill with dark culmen

Black primaries and secondaries

Sometimes freezes with neck held upwards

Immatures similar to adults but lack the malar streak

Similar species:

Least Bittern is much smaller with buff wing coverts. Immature Night-Herons have white spotting or streaking on the upperparts, lack the black malar streak, have thicker bills, and lack the black primaries and secondaries (a useful field mark in flight).

Least bittern *Ixobrychus exilis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches Wingspan: 17 inches
Very small wading bird
Buff face and sides to the neck
White chin, throat, foreneck and belly
Buff wing coverts visible in flight and at rest

Adult male:

Black cap
Black back
Fairly faint brown streaks on fore-neck

Adult female:

Brown cap
Brown back
More obvious brown streaks on fore-neck

Juvenile:

Buff cap does not contrast with face
Blackish streaks on foreneck
Brown back

Similar species:

Green Heron lacks buff color to head and wings. All other herons are much larger.

Great blue heron *Ardea herodias*

Identification Tips:

Length: 38 inches Wingspan: 70 inches
Sexes similar
Huge long-legged long-necked wader
Usually holds neck in an S curve at rest and in flight
Long, thick, yellow bill

Adult:

White crown and face
Black plume extending from above and behind eye to beyond back of head
Brownish-buff neck with black-bordered white stripe down center of foreneck
Blue-gray back, wings and belly
Black shoulder
Shaggy neck and back plumes in alternate plumage

Immature:

Black cap
Brownish-gray back and upperwings
Lacks shaggy neck and back plumes
Lacks black plume extending from behind eye

Great White Heron:

White morph of Great Blue Heron
Large yellow bill
Yellow legs
White plumage
Single white plume extending back from above eye
Found only in South Florida, rarely north along the coast

Similar species:

Tricolored Heron has white belly. Reddish Egret and Little Blue Heron are smaller, and lack white on head and yellow in bill. Great White Heron could be confused with Great Egret but is larger, with yellow legs and the single head plume coming from behind the eye.

Great egret *Ardea alba*

Identification Tips:

Length: 32 inches Wingspan: 55 inches
Sexes similar
Large long-legged long-necked wading bird
Usually holds neck in an S curve in flight
Long, thick yellow bill
Black legs and feet
Entirely white plumage
Juvenile similar to basic-plumaged adult

Adult alternate:

Shaggy neck and back plumes

Similar species:

Cattle Egret much smaller with a shorter, stubbier bill and pale legs. Snowy Egret is smaller and has black bill and yellow feet. Immature Little blue Heron is smaller and has a pale bill with a black tip, and green legs. Reddish Egrets (white morph) have pale bills with black tips and blue-gray legs. The Great White Heron of southern Florida has yellow legs

Snowy egret *Egretta thula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 20 inches Wingspan: 38 inches
Sexes similar
Medium-sized long-legged wading bird
Usually holds necks in S curve in flight
Entirely white plumage

Adult:

Thin black bill and yellow facial skin
Black legs with yellow feet
Shaggy plumes on head, neck, and back in alternate plumage

Immature:

Yellow stripe up the back of the black legs, and yellow feet
With pale-based bill when they leave nest, becomes black during autumn
Lacks shaggy head, neck and back plumes

Similar species:

Great Egret and Great White Heron larger with thicker, yellow bills. Cattle Egret smaller, with shorter, yellow or orange bill and pale legs. The Reddish Egret can be similar as white morph immatures, but has a much larger bill, blue-gray legs and gray lores. Immature Little Blue Heron has a variably gray- or yellow-based bill with black tip and can be similar to immature Snowies that have pale bases to the bills, but always has gray facial skin, green legs and blue-gray primary tips (best seen in flight from below and not always visible at rest). Little Egret, which occurs only rarely in North America, is very similar but has gray facial skin and two long head plumes in alternate plumage

Little blue heron *Egretta caerulea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches Wingspan: 41 inches
Sexes similar
Medium-sized long-legged long-necked wader
Usually holds neck in an S curve at rest and in flight
Bill long and pointed
Dull green legs

Adult alternate:

Blue-gray black-tipped bill
Blue-gray belly, back and wings
Chestnut head and neck
Shaggy neck plumes

Adult basic:

Blue-gray black-tipped bill
Head and neck blue-gray like body
Lacks shaggy neck plumes

Immature:

White body plumage
Blue-gray tips to the outer primaries visible from below when bird is in flight
Gray lores
Black-tipped bill usually with blue-gray base, but occasionally yellow or flesh
In their first spring or first summer, immatures start gaining the adults' dark plumage and can be mottled with blue-gray and white.

Similar species:

Adults are similar only to Reddish Egret, which is much larger and bigger-billed, and has a paler reddish neck, shaggier neck, and head plumes and blue-gray legs. Immature Snowy Egrets are similar to immature Little Blues but have black legs with a yellow stripe up the back, yellow feet, and yellow lores, and lack the blue-gray primary tips, and, usually, lack the two-toned bill. Adult white morph Reddish Egrets can be similar to immature Little Blues but are much larger, have blue-gray legs, shaggy neck and head plumes and a pink base to the bill. Immature white morph Reddish Egrets can be separated by the larger bill, bluish legs, and lack of blue-gray primary tips

Tricolored heron *Egretta tricolor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches Wingspan: 38 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized long-legged long-necked wader

Bill fairly long and pointed

Variably yellowish or blue-gray bill with black tip

Usually holds neck in an S curve at rest and in flight

White belly and foreneck

Adult:

Blue-gray head, neck, back and upperwings

White line along foreneck

In alternate plumage, long blue filamentous plumes about head and neck, and buff ones on the back

Immature:

Rich chestnut head and neck

Chestnut feathering on blue-gray back

Similar species:

No other dark herons have a contrasting white belly.

Reddish egret *Egretta rufescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 25 inches Wingspan: 46 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized, long-legged, long-necked wader

Bill fairly long and pointed

Pink-based bill with black tip

Dark legs and feet

Sometimes actively feeds by flapping wings and running through shallow water

Usually holds neck in an S curve at rest and in flight

Adult-dark morph:

Blue-gray body

Brownish head and neck with shaggy plumes

Adult-white morph:

White body

White head and neck with shaggy plumes

Immature:

Brown body, head, and neck

Similar species:

In all plumages the heavy, pink-based bill and shaggy neck are diagnostic. The dark Little Blue Heron is somewhat similar but has a gray-based bill and is smaller without the shaggy neck. Tricolored Heron has a white belly. White morph birds are similar to egrets and other white phase herons but note the different bill and leg colors

Cattle egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches Wingspan: 37 inches

Sexes similar

Fairly small

Short, thick pointed bill

White body plumage

Tucks neck in close to body in flight and often at rest, rarely extending it

Often seen feeding in pastures or other open habitats away from water

Adult alternate:

Only very briefly attains full alternate plumage

Deep red bill

Deep red legs

Buff feathering around the head, neck and back

Adult basic:

Bill dull orange or yellow

Legs dull orange

Entirely white body plumage

Immature:

Black bill turns pale yellow by early fall

Dusky legs

Similar species:

Quite unlike any other heron. Much smaller than Great Egret or Great White Heron.

Smaller than Snowy Egret and immature Little Blue Heron and with orange instead of dark or bicolored bills.

Green heron *Butorides virescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 25 inches

Sexes similar

Small, short-legged and short-necked heron

Yellow legs

Tucks neck in close to body in flight and often at rest, rarely extending it

Black cap

Blue-gray back and wings

Adult:

Chestnut neck

White chin

White stripe down center of neck

Immature:

Reddish-brown and white streaks on head and neck

Extensive white spots on wing coverts

Similar species:

No similar species. Least Bittern is much smaller with buff head and neck and buff patches on wing coverts

Black-crowned night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Identification Tips:

Length: 20 inches Wingspan: 44 inches

Sexes similar

Fairly small, stocky, short-legged and short-necked heron

Bill medium-sized and pointed

Tucks neck in close to body in flight and at rest, rarely extending it

Adult:

Red eyes, legs yellow

Black bill

Black crown and back

White face, throat, foreneck, chest and belly

Blue-gray wings

Two long, white, filamentous plumes extending from back of head in alternate plumage

Juvenile:

Eyes yellowish to amber, legs dull greyish

Yellow base to bill

Brown head, neck, chest and belly streaked with buff and white

Wings and back darker brown with large white spots at the tips of the feathers; spots especially large on the greater secondary coverts

Immature:

Acquires full adult plumage in its third year

First year birds are similar to juvenile, but have less extensive spotting on upperwings and a dark cap

Second year birds resemble the adult, but have a brown neck and wings contrasting with darker brown cap and back

Similar species:

Adults are unmistakable. Immatures can be separated from American Bittern by pale spotting on the upperwing, lack of black neck spot, different shape, stouter bills and more even upperwing coloration in flight. Juvenile Yellow-crowned Night-Heron has smaller spots on greater secondary coverts, smaller spots on head and neck, thicker bill, and longer legs. Immature Black Crowns can show a variety of plumage characters so are best separated from immature Yellow-crowns by their smaller, thinner bill and shorter legs.

Yellow-crowned night-heron *Nyctanassa violacea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 21 inches Wingspan: 44 inches

Sexes similar

Fairly small, long-legged, short-necked heron

Tucks neck in close to body in flight and often at rest, rarely extending it

Black bill

Leg color varies with age, as with Black Crowns

Long legs, with feet and part of legs extending beyond tail in flight

Adult:

Red eyes

Blue-gray neck, chest, back and belly

Dark centers to back feathers

Pale yellowish forehead and buffy-white crown

Black face and chin with broad white auricular stripe

Juvenile:

Eyes yellowish to amber

Head, neck, chest and belly dark gray-brown streaked finely with buff and white

Darker cap

Wings and back darker brown with small white spots at the tips of the feathers

Greater secondary coverts with crisp white edgings and small spots at tips

Immature:

Gradually acquires adult plumage over 2 years, losing spotting and streaking and gradually acquiring face and body plumage of adult

Similar species:

Adult unmistakable. Immatures separated from American Bittern by pale spotting on the upperwing, reddish eye, lack of black neck spot, different shape, stouter bills and more even upperwing coloration in flight. Juvenile separated from juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron by pale edgings on greater secondary coverts, smaller spots about head and neck, larger bill and longer legs. Immatures can show a variety of plumage characters so are best separated from immature Black-crowns by their larger, thicker bill and longer legs, although if remnants of juvenile plumage or the first hints of adult plumage can be seen, the identification should be simplified.

White ibis *Eudocimus albus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches Wingspan: 38 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized long-legged long-necked wading bird

Long, decurved bill

Holds neck extended in flight

Adult:

White body plumage with black tips to outer primaries

Bill and facial skin pinkish-red

Red legs

Immature:

Brown head, neck, back and wings

White belly

Orange bill and facial skin

Dull legs

Similar species:

Adults are unmistakable. Curlews are much smaller, mottled brown and black with white necks and bellies and usually with a distinctive head pattern. The white belly of the immature White Ibis distinguishes it from Glossy Ibis and White-faced Ibis

Glossy ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 19 inches Wingspan: 37 inches
Sexes similar
Medium-sized long-legged long-necked wader
Bill long, dark gray, and decurved
Dark brown eye
Holds neck extended in flight

Adult alternate:

Bare facial skin at lores is blue-gray
Bare facial skin bordered partially with a white or pale blue band that is of varying width and does not encircle the back of the eye
Legs gray to dull red
Head, neck, back and belly an iridescent purple-red, appearing entirely dark or black at a distance or in poor light
Iridescent green wings and tail

Adult basic:

Gray facial skin
Border to bare facial skin still present but dull gray
Gray-green legs
Head, neck, back and belly a duller gray-brown without iridescence
Head and neck streaked with white

Immature:

Dull gray brown head, neck, back and belly sometimes with white streaking
Facial skin dull blue-gray, develops dull gray border during first autumn
Gray-green legs

Similar species:

Curlews also have long decurved bills but are much smaller, brown above and white below, not black and iridescent. Immature White Ibis has a white belly. The White-faced Ibis is very similar in all plumages. Adult White-faced Ibis has a red, not brown, eye. In alternate plumage the White-faced Ibis has an even white band around the bare red facial skin and has redder legs. Immatures are extremely similar

White-faced ibis *Plegadis chihi*

Identification Tips:

Length: 19 inches Wingspan: 37 inches
Sexes similar
Medium-sized long-legged long-necked wader
Bill long, dark gray, and decurved
Holds neck extended in flight

Adult alternate:

Red eye
Bare facial skin ringed entirely with a white band of feathering that remains of even width throughout
Bare facial skin at lores is bright red
Red legs
Head, neck, back and belly an iridescent purple-red, appearing dark or black at a distance or in poor light
Wings and tail iridescent green

Adult basic:

Red eye
Bare facial skin is grayish, without a paler border
Gray-green legs
Head, neck, back and belly a duller gray-brown without iridescence
Head and neck streaked with white

Immature:

Dark eye becomes red during first fall, but may be difficult to observe
Dull blue-gray facial skin
Gray-green legs
Dull gray brown head and neck sometimes with white streaking
Dull gray brown back and belly

Similar species:

Curlews much smaller, brown above and white below, not dark and iridescent. Immature White Ibis has a white belly. White-faced Ibis can be distinguished from Glossy Ibis in alternate plumage by its red eye, red facial skin, white border to the facial skin that is of even width and encircles the eye and the red legs. In basic plumage it can be distinguished by the red eye and the lack of any border to the facial skin (which has turned gray). Dark-eyed immatures cannot be distinguished with certainty from immature Glossy Ibis

Roseate spoonbill *Ajaia ajaja*

Identification Tips:

Length: 28 inches Wingspan: 53 inches
Sexes similar
Large, long-legged wader with a long neck
Long, spatulate bill
Holds neck extended in flight

Adult:

Red eyes
Bill grayish with dark mottling
Head greenish and unfeathered with black nape band
White neck and back
Pink back and wings
Legs red, feet dark

Immature:

Yellow eyes
Bill yellowish
White or very pale pink body plumage
White feathered head

Similar species:

No other bird has a similar bill. Flamingos are also long-legged pink wading birds but have short, thick, hooked bills and black in the flight feathers.

Wood stork *Mycteria americana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 35 inches Wingspan: 66 inches
Sexes similar
Large, long-legged wader with a long neck
Large bill, thick and slightly decurved
Head and neck unfeathered and black
White body plumage
Black primaries and secondaries
Holds neck extended in flight

Adult:

Dark bill

Immature:

Yellow bill
Feathered head is grayish-brown

Similar Species:

Most other large white birds lack black flight feathers. White Pelican much different in shape, tucks its neck in while flying, has short legs and a long, orange bill. Whooping Crane has white secondaries and a white, feathered head and neck. White Ibis is much smaller with white head and neck, reddish bill and white secondaries.

Black vulture *Coragyps atratus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches Wingspan: 54 inches

Sexes similar

Large, broad-winged, soaring bird

Tail short and squared-off

Rather long, thick, gray legs

Longish, hooked, dark bill

Holds wings flat while soaring and gliding

Flies with several quick flaps and a brief glide

Unfeathered, gray head and throat

Plumage entirely black except for whitish outer primaries

Immature similar to adult

Similar species:

The Turkey Vulture is also dark with an unfeathered head, but has a much different shape in flight. The Turkey Vulture is long-winged and long-tailed and flies with a pronounced dihedral angle to the wings. Turkey Vultures lack the white patch at the wingtips and show contrast between paler flight feathers and darker coverts. Eagles are larger with feathered heads and different patterns of white in the wings and tail. Dark morph hawks have longer tails usually with white markings and feathered heads.

Turkey vulture *Cathartes aura*

Identification Tips:

Length: 25 inches Wingspan: 72 inches

Sexes similar

Very large, broad-winged, soaring bird

Long and rounded tail

Longish, hooked bill

Rather short, thick legs

Holds wings in a dihedral angle while soaring and gliding

Spends most time soaring, infrequent flaps are slow and laborious

Small, unfeathered head

Plumage dark brown except for paler flight feathers, appearing black and gray

Immature like adult

Adult:

Red head

Yellowish bill

Reddish legs

Immature:

Gray head

Gray bill

Gray legs

Similar species:

The Black Vulture is also dark with an unfeathered head, but has a much different shape in flight. It is short-winged, short-tailed, and intersperses glides on flat wings with quick, snappy wingbeats. Turkey Vultures lack the white patch at the wingtips and show contrast between paler flight feathers and darker coverts. Bald and Golden eagles are both superficially similar, but fly on flat wings, have feathered heads, and do not have contrastingly gray flight feathers. The Zone-tailed Hawk in the Southwest has a similar shape and flight style, but has a feathered head and white bands on a black tail.

California condor *Gymnogyps californianus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 45 inches Wingspan: 120 inches
Sexes similar
Huge, broad-winged, short-tailed, soaring bird
Longish, hooked bill
Holds wings relatively flat while soaring and gliding
Unfeathered head
White underwing coverts
Plumage dark
Rare and local in the wild

Adult:

White patch on upper surface of inner wing-visible in flight and at rest
Reddish to yellowish head
Subadult similar to adult but has more mottling on underwing coverts
Immatures take several years to reach adult plumage

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Immature:

Head and neck dusky
Underwing coverts heavily mottled

Similar species:

The California Condor is much larger than any other raptor. At a distance, where its size may not be as apparent, note that the tail is shorter than similarly dark Turkey Vulture, Golden Eagle, and immature Bald Eagle

Greater flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Identification Tips:

Length: 42 inches Wingspan: 55 inches
Sexes similar
Large, long-legged wader with a long neck
Pink legs and feet
Black primaries and secondaries
Holds neck extended in flight
Rare and local in Florida
Occasionally escapes from zoos

Adult:

Dark pink plumage
Hooked, pink bill with black tip

Immature:

Pale pink and gray plumage
Hooked, light bill with black tip

Similar species:

No other bird has a similar bill. Spoonbills are also long-legged pink wading birds but have long, spatulate bills and lack black in the flight feathers. The Greater Flamingo is quite rare and local in Florida and accidental elsewhere. Several species of flamingos occasionally escape from zoos and can be confused with the Greater Flamingo but they are usually paler in color.

Black-bellied whistling-duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 37 inches
Large, long-legged, long-necked duck
Sexes similar

Adult:

Bright orange bill
Pink legs
Gray face and upper neck with white eye ring
Chestnut cap, nape, lower neck, chest and back
Black belly
White secondary coverts and white bases to the black primaries and secondaries creates a long wing stripe in flight and a visible pale patch at rest
Leading edge of wing chestnut like body

Immature:

Dark gray bill
Dark gray legs
Paler brown body plumage
Gray belly

Similar species:

Immature Fulvous Whistling-Duck could be confused with an immature Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, but has a white flank stripe, dark wings without a wing stripe and a pale rump patch.

Fulvous whistling-duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 36 inches
Large, long-legged, long-necked duck
Sexes similar

Adult:

Dark bill
Dark legs
Rich buff head, neck, chest and belly
Black back with chestnut edging to feathers
White flank stripe
White rump and undertail coverts
Dark tail
Wings dark with chestnut upperwing coverts visible in flight

Immature:

Like adult, but duller with less contrast between back and rump

Similar species:

Adult unmistakable. Immature could be confused with immature Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, but note the dark rump, white wing stripe, and the lack of white flank stripe in the latter.

White-fronted goose *Anser albifrons*

Identification Tips:

Length: 20 inches Wingspan: 60 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized long-necked goose

Adult

Mostly brown plumage

White patch at base of pink or orange bill

Irregular black spots on belly

White line separating belly from wings

White under and uppertail coverts, dark tail

Orange legs and feet

Immature

Mostly brown plumage darker on the upperparts

Yellowish bill, legs, and feet

Similar species:

The White-fronted Goose is the only goose with irregular black spots on the belly and a white patch at the base of the bill. Immatures lack these marks and could be confused with immature blue phase Snow Geese but they have yellowish rather than dark bills, legs, and feet. Escaped domesticated geese can be similar.

Emperor goose *Chen canagica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 43 inches

Sexes similar

Small coastal goose

Gray body with black and white feather edging

White tail

Orange legs and feet

Adult

White head and nape

Pink bill

Black throat

Immature

Dark head with variable white flecks

Dark bill

Similar species:

Gray body with black and white feather edging is distinctive.

Snow goose *Chen caerulescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 19 inches Wingspan: 58-59 inches
Sexes similar
Medium-sized long-necked goose
Different color morphs
Frequently gathers in huge flocks
Sometimes hybridizes with similar Ross's Goose

White morph-adult

Entirely white plumage
Black primaries
Pink legs and feet
Pink bill with black patch along mandibles
Sometimes has orangish stains on head

White morph-immature

Mostly white plumage
Pale gray nape, back, and wing coverts
Black primaries
Dark legs and feet
Dark bill

Blue morph-adult

White head and upper neck
Dark lower neck and body-some have white bellies
Pale gray wing upperwing coverts
Scapulars dark-centered with white edges
Mostly dark primaries and secondaries
Pink legs and feet
Pink bill with black patch along mandibles

Blue morph-immature

Mostly dark gray-brown plumage
Dark legs and feet
Dark bill

Similar species:

The white morph of the Snow Goose is similar to widely-escaped domesticated barnyard goose. Note that the Snow Goose has black primaries and a distinctive bill pattern. Domesticated geese have white primaries and, often, an entirely orange bill. White morph Ross's Goose is extremely similar to the white morph Snow Goose. The Ross's Goose is smaller with a stubbier bill without the black patch on the mandibles. It also appears rounder-headed with a shorter neck. Immature white morph Snow Goose is darker-backed than the immature white morph Ross's Goose. The rare blue morph of the Ross's Goose can be separated from the similar blue morph of the Snow Goose by the same structural characteristics already mentioned. Hybrids between Ross's and Snow Geese have intermediate characteristics. The immature blue morph is similar to the immature White-fronted Goose but has dark legs and bill.

Ross's goose *Chen rossii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 51 inches
Sexes similar
Small goose
Different color morphs
Sometimes hybridizes with similar Snow Goose

White morph-adult

Entirely white plumage
Black primaries
Pink legs and feet
Pink bill

White morph-immature

Mostly white plumage-pale gray upperparts
Black primaries
Dark legs and feet
Dark bill

Blue morph-adult

White head and upper neck
Dark lower neck and body
Pale gray wing upperwing coverts
Scapulars dark-centered with white edges
Mostly dark primaries and secondaries
Pink legs and feet
Pink bill

Similar species:

White morph Ross's Goose is extremely similar to the white morph Snow Goose. The Ross's Goose is smaller with a stubbier bill without the black patch on the mandibles. It also appears rounder-headed with a shorter neck. Immature white morph Snow Goose is darker-backed than the immature white morph Ross's Goose. The rare blue morph of the Ross's Goose can be separated from the similar blue morph of the Snow Goose by the same structural characteristics already mentioned. Hybrids between Ross's and Snow Geese have intermediate characteristics.

Canada goose *Branta canadensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16-25 inches Wingspan: 50-68 inches

Sexes similar

Large long-necked goose

Black bill

Black head and neck

White throat patch extends up to cheek

Brown back, upper wing and flanks

Brownish-white breast and belly

White upper tail coverts contrast with black tail

White undertail coverts

Great size variation, with some northern subspecies duck-sized

Immature similar to adult

Similar species:

Similar only to Brant, which has a black breast, white flanks and a small white neck patch rather than a large white throat and cheek patch.

Brant *Branta bernicla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches Wingspan: 48 inches

Sexes similar

Small coastal goose

Black head, neck, and breast

White patch on neck

Black bill, legs, and feet

White upper and undertail coverts, rump, and dark tail

Very dark wings

Adult-Pacific coast

Very dark back

Blackish belly

Some white on flanks

Adult-Atlantic coast

Dark back

Pale belly and flanks

Similar species:

Other dark geese have white face patches.

Mute swan *Cygnus olor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 40 inches

Large, long-necked waterbird with short legs and a short duck-like bill

Long neck held in distinctive S curve at rest

Adult:

Orange bill with black base, lores and knob above bill

Black legs and feet

Entirely white plumage

Fluffy back feathers

Female has smaller bill knob

Sexes similar

Immature:

We are still arguing about this section! Check back later.

Similar species:

Adult easily separated from other swans and geese by its orange bill and black knob above bill. We will get back to you about the immatures!

Trumpeter swan *Cygnus buccinator*

Identification Tips:

Length: 45 inches Wingspan: 95 inches

Large, long-necked waterbird with short legs and a short duck-like bill

Long neck held straight up with a kink at base

Adult:

Black bill

Culmen straight

Black of bill extends up to eye but does not encircle it

V shaped demarcation on forehead between black bill and white feathering

Black legs and feet

Entirely white plumage

Sexes similar

Immature:

We are still arguing about this section! Check back later.

Body grayer than adult

Similar species:

The very large Trumpeter Swan is unlikely to be confused with anything but other swans. White Pelicans, Whooping Cranes, Wood Storks, and Snow Geese are all white birds that from a great distance could look like swans but all have black primaries. The adult Mute Swan can be told from the adult Trumpeter Swan by its orange and black knobby bill.

The adult Trumpeter Swan is very similar to the adult Tundra Swan but it is slightly larger, has a straight culmen, the bill has no yellow spot, the eye is almost enclosed by black, and the white feathering on the head extends in a v shape into the dark bill. We will get back to you about the immatures!

Tundra swan *Cygnus columbianus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 36 inches Wingspan: 85 inches

Large, long-necked waterbird with short legs and a short duck-like bill

Long neck held straight up with a kink at base

Adult:

Black bill with variably-sized yellow spot at base

Culmen somewhat concave

Black of bill extends up to eye but does not encircle it

Straight demarcation on forehead between black bill and white feathering

Black legs and feet

Entirely white plumage

Sexes similar

Immature:

We are still arguing about this section! Check back later.

Body grayer than adult

Similar species:

The very large Tundra Swan is unlikely to be confused with anything but other swans. White Pelicans, Whooping Cranes, Wood Storks, and Snow Geese are all white birds that from a great distance could look like swans but all have black primaries. The adult Mute Swan can be told from the adult Tundra Swan by its orange and black knobby bill. The adult Trumpeter Swan is very similar to the adult Tundra Swan but it is slightly larger, has a straight culmen, the bill has no yellow spot, the eye is enclosed by black, and the white feathering on the head extends in a v shape into the dark bill. In the far northwest, a subspecies of the Tundra Swan shows more yellow at the base of the bill and could be confused with the Alaskan Whooper Swan. The Whooper Swan has yellow in the bill that goes beyond the nostril. We will get back to you about the immatures!

Wood duck *Aix sponsa*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13.5 inches Wingspan: 28 inches
A medium-sized duck with a long crest on head
Long-winged and long-tailed
Blue-green speculum with white rear border

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from Fall-through early summer
Red bill
Red eye
Green head
Striking white stripes about face and crest with a large white throat patch and fingerlike extensions onto cheek and neck
Chestnut breast and neck with vertical white stripe at lower margin
Golden flanks bordered above by a white flank stripe
White belly
Iridescent dark green-blue back and wings

Adult male basic:

In basic plumage, the male resembles the female, but often retains the distinctive neck patch and red bill

Adult female:

Gray bill
White teardrop shaped patch around eye
White throat
Gray-brown head and neck
Gray-brown breast stippled with white and fading to a white belly
Dark brown back

Juvenal plumage:

Gray bill
Female similar to adult female
Males similar to adult females, but with white neck patch

Similar species:

Adult male is unmistakable. Female, immature and eclipse males are nondescript, but distinctive in face pattern, shape and speculum pattern.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14.5 inches Wingspan: 35 inches
Large dabbling duck with steep forehead
White speculum
Juvenile similar to adult female

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer
Black bill
Brown head
Gray body
Gray and brown breast, back and upperwing coverts
Black rump, uppertail coverts and undertail coverts
White belly

Adult male basic

Similar to adult female

Adult female:

Gray bill with orange edges
Mottled gray, brown and white body plumage
Distinct white belly patch

Similar species:

Adult male in alternate plumage is unmistakable. All plumages easily identified in flight and occasionally at rest by white speculum. Females and immature at rest can be identified by their steeper head profile than similarly-plumaged Mallards, by the gray bill with orange edges, and by the distinct white belly patch.

Eurasian wigeon *Anas penelope*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13.5 inches Wingspan: 32 inches

Large dabbling duck

Blue bill with black nail

White secondary coverts (grayer in females) and green speculum

Gray axillars

White belly

Juvenile similar to adult female

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Yellowish crown

Rufous head

Rusty breast

Pale gray back and flanks

White patch at rear portion of flanks

Black undertail coverts

Adult female:

Blue bill with black tip

Mottled dark brown body plumage with rustier flanks contrasting with paler head and neck

Dusky eye patch

Similar species:

Adult male in alternate plumage is unmistakable. All plumages distinguished from all other dabbling ducks (except American Wigeon) by pale gray or white secondary coverts in flight. At rest Wigeon have a distinctive steep forehead and gently sloped rear part of the head, as well as pale blue bills. The American Wigeon is similar to the rarer Eurasian Wigeon in the female plumage and is safely distinguished only in flight by its white, not gray, axillars, and sometimes by the contrast between head and back plumage.

American wigeon *Anas americana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 34 inches

Large dabbling duck

Blue bill with black nail

White secondary coverts (grayer in females) and green speculum

White axillars

White belly

Juvenile similar to adult female

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

White crown

Green post-ocular stripe

Streaked gray lower face and neck

Rusty breast and flanks

Dark brown back

White patch at rear portion of flanks

Black undertail coverts

Adult male basic:

Similar to adult female but usually retains rusty flanks and white forewing

Adult female:

Blue bill with black tip

Mottled dark brown body plumage with rustier flanks contrasting with paler head and neck

Dusky eye patch

Similar species:

Adult in alternate plumage is unmistakable. All plumages distinguished from all other dabbling ducks (except Eurasian Wigeon) by pale gray or white secondary coverts in flight. At rest Wigeon have a distinctive steep forehead and gently sloped rear part of the head, as well as pale blue bills. The rare Eurasian Wigeon is very similar in female, immature and eclipse male plumages and is safely distinguished only in flight by its gray, not white, axillars, and sometimes by the lack of contrast between head and back plumage.

American black duck *Anas rubripes*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 36 inches

Large dabbling duck

Pale gray-brown face

Dark brown cap and eye line

Dark brown breast, belly, back and upper wing

Purple speculum without white borders

Bright silvery wing linings

Immature similar to adult

Adult male:

Greenish-yellow bill

Legs frequently bright red

Adult female:

Greenish bill with black patches

Legs generally orange

Similar species:

Female, immature and eclipse male Mallards are much paler, without contrast between head and body and with white borders to a blue speculum. Hybrid Mallard x Black Ducks are often seen and usually have traces of the mallard plumage, with bluer speculum usually bordered with white on one or both edges. Mottled Duck is similar, with broader brown edgings to upperparts and bluer speculum. Female Gadwalls have a steeper forehead, gray bill, white belly, and usually shows white in the wing.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15-16 inches Wingspan: 36 inches

Large dabbling duck

Blue speculum with white bar along both leading and trailing edges

Silvery-white wing linings

Juvenile similar to adult female

In the southwestern United States the Mexican Duck, formerly a separate species, has both sexes similar to the female Mallard

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Gray back

Yellow bill

Green head

White ring around neck

Chestnut breast

Gray flanks and upperwing coverts

Black undertail coverts contrast with white tail

Adult male basic:

Similar to adult female, but usually with chestnut breast and an unmarked yellowish bill

Adult female:

Orange bill with black central patch

Pale brown face

Dark cap and eye line

Mottled brown and tan plumage

Similar species:

Adult male in alternate plumage is unmistakable. Females, immature and eclipse-plumage males could be confused with Black Ducks, Gadwalls and Mottled Ducks, but note the blue speculum with white borders on both sides. Gadwalls are also distinctive in their steeper forehead, gray bill with orange edges and white belly patch. Hybrid Mallard x Black Ducks are often seen and are darker than Mallards, with a more purple speculum bordered by white on one or both edges and usually show some traces of the Mallard plumage.

Mottled duck *Anas fulvigula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches

Sexes similar

Large dabbling duck

Yellow bill

Pale buff brown head

Darker brown cap and eye line

Mottled dark brown and buff back and upperwing coverts

Blue-green speculum with white bar along trailing edge

Similar species:

American Black Duck is similar with broader brown edgings to upperparts and a bluer speculum. Female, immature and eclipse male Mallards always have blue speculums with white borders to both the front and rear margins. Beware of hybrid Mallard x Black Ducks that are usually paler than Black Ducks, with blue speculums and usually with white borders on one or both edges of the speculum.

Blue-winged teal *Anas discors*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches Wingspan: 24 inches
Small dabbling duck
Medium-sized bill without spatulate tip
Pale blue upper secondary coverts
Green speculum with white leading edge
Dark bill
Juvenile similar to adult female

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from early winter through early summer
Blue-gray head with darker cap
White crescent on face in front of eye
Buff breast and flanks with darker spotting
White band at rear portion of flanks
Black undertail coverts

Adult male basic

Similar to adult female, but forewing brighter

Adult female:

Pale head
Dark crown and eye line
Pale eye ring, and loreal spot
Mottled gray-brown body plumage with darker back

Similar species:

Adult in alternate plumage is unmistakable. Female, immature and eclipse male similar to Green-winged and Cinnamon Teals. Note the small size and small bill of the Green-winged Teals as well as the green speculum. Cinnamon Teal is very difficult to distinguish in some (female) plumages, but note the smaller bill without a spatulate tip and the more distinct facial pattern (pale loreal spot and more distinct eye line) of the Blue-winged Teal.

Cinnamon teal *Anas cyanoptera*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches Wingspan: 25 inches
Small dabbling duck
Long bill is somewhat spatulate at tip
Juvenile similar to adult female
Pale blue upper secondary coverts
Green speculum with white leading edge

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall-spring
Red eyes
Dark bill
Bright cinnamon-red head, neck, flanks, and belly
Dark brown back with pale edging
Black undertail coverts

Adult male basic

Similar to adult female but retains red eye and brighter forewing

Adult female:

Gray bill
Brown eyes
Pale head
Indistinct dark eye line and crown
Indistinct pale eye ring and loreal spot
Mottled warm brown body plumage with darker back

Similar species:

Adult male in alternate plumage is unmistakable. Adult male in eclipse plumage is easily identified by the red eye. Adult females and immature distinguished from Green-winged Teal by size and wing pattern. Female, immature and eclipse male Blue-winged Teal are very similar but have a smaller bill without spatulate tip, and a more distinct facial pattern (pale loreal spot and more distinct eye line).

Northern shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 31 inches
Large dabbling duck
Large spatulate bill
Juvenile similar to adult female

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer
Black bill
Eyes yellow
Green head
White lower neck, breast, and tail
Rusty underbody with white band on hind flanks
Dark back, with elongated white scapulars
Pale blue upper secondary coverts
Green speculum with white leading and trailing edges

Adult male basic

Similar to adult female

Adult female:

Eyes brown
Orange bill with dusky patches
Mottled brown and buff head, neck and back
Dusky blue upper secondary coverts
Dull green speculum with white fore border

Similar species:

Large, spatulate bill makes the Northern Shoveler immediately recognizable in all plumages.

Northern pintail *Anas acuta*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18.5 inches Wingspan: 35 inches

Medium-sized dabbling duck with very long neck, small head and attenuated rear

Juvenile similar to adult female

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Pale gray bill with black stripe down center

Dark brown head

White neck, breast and belly with white finger extending up back of neck to rear part of face

Gray flanks and back with black centers to back feathers

Whitish patch at rear portion of flanks bordering undertail coverts

Black undertail coverts

Long, black central tail feathers

Green speculum with white rear border and chestnut forward border

Adult male basic:

Similar to adult female but retains green speculum

Adult female:

Gray bill

Tan head and neck

Mottled tan and dark brown back and body plumage, paler on belly

Brown speculum with white rear border

Similar species:

Adult male unmistakable in alternate plumage. Females, immature and eclipse-plumage males are similar to many other female ducks but have a distinctive shape: very long-necked, small-headed and pointed-tailed. Note also female's brown speculum bordered at the rear by white.

Green-winged teal *Anas crecca*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10.5 inches Wingspan: 24 inches
Very small, short-necked, and small-billed dabbling duck
Green speculum
Whitish belly
Juvenile similar to adult female

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from Fall through early summer
Dark bill
Rich rust-colored head
Iridescent green face patch sweeping through eye and tapering to the back of head
Buff chest with dark spotting
Gray flanks and back
Vertical white line at fore part of flanks
Horizontal black line above flanks
Buff outer undertail coverts bordered by black
Black central undertail coverts

Adult male basic:

Similar to adult female, but with duller face pattern

Adult female:

Dark gray bill
Pale brown head and neck
Dark brown cap and eye line
Dark brown back and upperwing coverts scalloped with buff
White breast spotted with brown
White belly

Similar species:

Adult male unmistakable in winter. Females, immature and eclipse males similar to most female ducks, but are very small, short-billed, and have a distinctive wing pattern that is sometimes visible at rest.

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 34 inches

Medium-sized diving duck

Long sloping forehead and peaked crown produce distinctive profile

Black bill

Immature female similar to adult female, immature male is similar to female in autumn, but acquires alternate plumage during winter

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Red eye

Reddish head and neck

Black breast

Pale gray back and flanks

White belly

Black tail, upper- and undertail coverts

Adult male basic:

Duller than alternate plumage, especially about the breast and back

Adult female:

Brown eye

Brown head and neck

Pale gray back and flanks

White belly

Similar species:

Adult male Redhead is similar in alternate plumage to adult male Canvasback, but has yellow eye, blue bill with black tip, much grayer back and different profile. Female-plumage Redheads also have blue-gray bill with black tip, brownish body plumage without contrast between the head and body and a different profile.

Redhead *Aythya americana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14.5 inches Wingspan: 33 inches

Medium-sized diving duck

Smoothly rounded head

Dark wing with grayish secondaries

Immature female similar to adult female, immature male is similar to female in autumn, but acquires alternate plumage during winter

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Eclipse-plumage male duller than in alternate plumage, especially about the breast and

Blue bill with white ring before black tip

Yellow eyes

Reddish head and neck

Black breast

Grayish back and flanks

Black tail, upper- and under-tail coverts

Whitish belly

Adult male basic:

Duller than in alternate plumage, especially about the breast and back

Adult female:

Brown eyes

Dark blue-gray bill with black tip

Brown head and body plumage

Whitish belly

Similar species:

Adult male Redhead in alternate plumage easily is distinguished from Canvasback by yellow eye, blue bill with black tip, gray back and different profile. Females distinguished from female Canvasback by brown body plumage and blue bill with black tip. Females can be distinguished from female Ring-necked Duck by smoothly rounded crown, dark cap and darker brown plumage.

Ring-necked duck *Aythya collaris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches Wingspan: 28 inches

Small, compact diving duck

Peaked crown

Dark wing with grayish flight feathers

Immature female similar to adult female, immature male is similar to female in autumn, but acquires alternate plumage during winter

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Blue bill with white ring around base, white subterminal ring, and black tip

Yellow eye

Purple head and neck

Chestnut ring around neck is not easily visible

Black breast

Gray flanks with vertical white finger at forward portion

Dark back, tail, upper- and undertail coverts

Whitish belly

Adult male basic:

Similar to adult female

Adult female:

Dark brown crown and pale gray-brown face, becoming whitish on lores

Dark blue-gray bill with white ring before black tip

Brown eye with narrow white eye ring

Dark brown body plumage with very dark back

Similar species:

Adult males can be distinguished from Scaup by different bill pattern, black back and grayish flanks. Female can be distinguished from female scaup by black tip on bill, and lack of distinct white patch on face. Female-plumage birds are distinguished from female-plumage Redheads by colder brown plumage, contrasting gray-brown face, and peaked crown.

Tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches

Small, compact diving duck

Rounded crown

Yellow eyes

Blue bill with black nail at tip

Dark wing with dark-tipped white secondaries and inner primaries and pale gray outer primaries

Immature female similar to adult female, immature male is similar to female in autumn, but acquires alternate plumage during winter

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Glossy purplish head with crest

Black breast and back

White flanks and belly

Black tail, upper- and under-tail coverts

Adult male basic:

Similar to adult female

Adult female:

Sometimes has small crest

Dark brown body plumage

Whitish belly

Similar species:

Adult male Ring-necked Duck similar in alternate plumage but has different bill pattern, grayer flanks and vertical white finger just behind black breast. Scaups are similar to the Tufted Duck but males have gray flanks and backs instead of white flanks and black backs. Females scaups are very similar but usually have a white band around base of bill and have less black at the tip of the bill.

Greater scaup *Aythya marila*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 31 inches

Small, compact diving duck

Rounded crown

Yellow eyes (brown in immatures)

Blue bill with black nail at tip

Dark wing with dark-tipped white secondaries and inner primaries and pale gray outer primaries

Immature female similar to adult female, immature male is similar to female in autumn, but acquires alternate plumage during winter

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Glossy greenish head

Black breast

Whitish or pale gray flanks, white belly

Whitish back with fine black vermiculations

Black tail, upper- and under-tail coverts

Adult male basic:

Similar to adult female

Adult female:

Distinct white band around base of bill

Dark brown body plumage

Whitish belly

Similar species:

The Greater Scaup can be distinguished from the very similar Lesser Scaup by its larger size, wing stripe that extends well into the primaries, and glossy, greenish head as an adult male in alternate plumage. Adult male Ring-necked Duck similar in alternate plumage but has quite different bill pattern, black back, grayer flanks and vertical white finger just behind black breast. The Ring-necked Duck favors freshwater habitats while the Greater Scaup prefers brackish or saltwater habitats. Very rare Tufted Duck is similar but note the distinctive tuft at the rear of the head. When the tuft is not visible, adult males have black backs. Females are very similar but usually lack white band around base of bill and have more black at the tip of the bill. The female Redhead is very similar in shape and coloration to the female Greater Scaup but it lacks the white patch at the base of the bill and has a gray wing stripe.

Lesser scaup *Aythya affinis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches Wingspan: 29 inches

Small, compact diving duck

Peaked crown

Yellow eyes

Blue bill with small black nail at tip

Dark wing with dark tipped white secondaries and pale gray primaries

Immature female similar to adult female, immature male is similar to female in autumn, but acquires alternate plumage during winter

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Glossy purplish head

Black breast

Whitish or pale gray flanks, white belly

Whitish back with fine black vermiculations

Black tail, upper- and under-tail coverts

Adult male basic:

Similar to adult female

Adult female:

Distinct white band around base of bill

Dark brown body plumage

Whitish belly

Similar species:

Adult male Ring-necked Duck similar in alternate plumage but has quite different bill pattern, black back, grayer flanks and vertical white finger just behind black breast. Greater Scaup is very similar but has a more rounded head, larger bill, dark-tipped white primaries and secondaries, and glossy, greenish head as an adult male in alternate plumage. Female Greater Scaup has more rounded head, a broader bill, and more white flight feathers, and frequently has a distinct pale spot behind eye on side of head.

Steller's eider *Polysticta stelleri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches Wingspan: 29 inches

Diving duck

Gray unfeathered bill

Squarish head

Long tail

Adult male alternate:

White head and flanks

Black on throat and back

Black around eye

Greenish patch on lores and rear of head

Black spot on breast

Black and white scapulars

Brownish belly

Adult female:

Dark brown plumage

Pale eyering

Similar species:

The adult male is not likely to be confused with any other duck. The very dark female is similar to other female eiders but note the smaller size, unfeathered bill, squarer head, and longer tail.

Spectacled eider *Somateria fischeri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 36 inches

Large diving duck

Bill feathered to nostril

Adult male alternate:

Pale green head with large white patch around eye

Yellow bill

Black underparts

White upperparts

Adult female:

Dark brown plumage with fine black barring

Pale brown patch around eye

Similar species:

The adult male is not likely to be confused with any other duck. The dark female is similar to other female eiders but note the patch around the eye and the more extensive feathering on the bill.

King eider *Somateria spectabilis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 37 inches
Large diving duck
Bill feathered partly along side and down forehead
Steep forehead

Adult male alternate:

Pale blue crown and rear of head
Bright orange bill and frontal shield outlined in black
Black back, flanks, belly, and tail
White neck, breast, and spot near tail
Immature male similar to female but has white breast and orange bill

Adult female:

Gray-brown plumage with fine black barring
Barring on flanks arrow-shaped

Similar species:

The adult male King Eider has a bright orange bill and shield and a dark back while the Common Eider a white back and lacks the orange bill and shield. Immature male Common Eider has a dark bill while the immature male King Eider has an orange bill. Female King and Common Eiders are very similar but note the barring on the flanks; linear in Common, arrow-shaped in King. King Eiders have steeper foreheads than Commons and the feathering on the bill is different-in the Common Eider it extends farther from the side of the bill toward the nostril and less far down the forehead.

Common eider *Somateria mollissima*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches Wingspan: 41 inches
Large diving duck
Bill feathered along side almost to nostril
Long sloping forehead

Adult male alternate:

Several races
Black crown
Greenish rear of head
Dark or yellow bill
Black underparts
White upperparts and breast
Black tail and around tail
Immature male similar to female but has white breast

Adult female:

Dark gray to rusty-brown plumage with fine black barring
Barring on flanks in lines

Similar species:

The adult male King Eider has a bright orange bill and shield and a dark back. Immature male Common Eider has a dark bill while the immature male King Eider has an orange bill. Female King and Common Eiders are very similar but note the barring on the flanks; linear in Common, arrow-shaped in King. King Eiders have steeper foreheads than Commons and the feathering on the bill is different-in the Common Eider it extends farther from the side of the bill toward the nostril and less far down the forehead than the King.

Harlequin duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches Wingspan: 26 inches
Small diving duck
Small gray bill
Dark wings

Adult male alternate:

Blue-gray head and body
White crescent behind bill
Two white patches on side of head
White streaks on neck and breast
White scapulars
Brown flanks
Black tail, undertail covert, and uppertail coverts
Immature male similar to adult male but plumage duller

Adult female:

Two to three distinct spots on head
Brown head and body
Pale belly

Similar species:

The adult male is not likely to be confused with any other duck. The very dark female is somewhat similar to female scoters but note the smaller size, smaller bill, rounder head, and different face pattern. The female Bufflehead is also small but only has one white spot on the head and a white speculum. In flight, the female Oldquaw also has dark wings but has more white in the head and body.

Surf scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 33 inches
Medium-sized diving duck
Sloping forehead
Base of bill unfeathered

Adult male:

Entirely black plumage
White patches on nape and forehead
Colorful bill: white with a red tip and black spot at base
Immature male similar to female

Adult female:

Two variably white spots on face
Dark crown
Very dark plumage
Immature females somewhat paler

Similar species:

The adult male Surf Scoter with its black plumage and white patches on the nape and forehead is distinctive. Female plumages of the Surf Scoter are similar to female plumages of the other scoters. It can be told from the Black Scoter by its more sloping forehead, and white face patches. The White-winged Scoter has white wing patches, a face that doesn't contrast with the crown, and a smaller bill.

White-winged scoter *Melanitta fusca*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 38 inches
Medium-sized diving duck
Large white speculum sometimes visible at rest
Sloping forehead
Base of bill partly feathered

Adult male:

Entirely black plumage
Small white patch around eye
Black bill with a red tip
Immature male similar to female

Adult female:

Two variably white spots on face
Very dark plumage
Immature females somewhat paler

Similar species:

The White-winged Scoter is most distinctive in flight. Its large white wing patches and dark plumage are diagnostic. At rest, the dark plumage is similar to other scoters; sometimes, the white wing patches are visible. Adult male White-winged Scoters have a distinctive white patch around the eye. Female Black Scoters have darker crowns with a contrasting paler face, lack the white spots on the face, and have rounder heads. Female Surf Scoters are very similar to female White-winged Scoters but have darker crowns and more obvious bills.

Black scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 33 inches

Medium-sized diving duck

Dark bill

Rounded head

Paler undersides of flight feathers contrasting with darker wing linings

Adult male:

Entirely black plumage

Bright orange patch at base of bill

Immature male similar to female but has yellow patch at base of bill

Adult female:

Dark crown and rear of head contrasting with paler face

Very dark plumage

Immature females somewhat paler

Similar species:

With its black plumage and bright orange base to the bill the male Black Scoter is unlikely to be confused with any other duck. The orange patch on the bill is visible from considerable distances, even in flight. The dark brown plumage of females and immatures is similar to that found in other female scoters. Note that the Black Scoter has a rounder head and lacks white patches on the face instead having a pale face contrasting with a dark crown. In flight, note the paler undersides to the flight feathers contrasting with the dark wing linings. The round head and dark plumage of the female Black Scoter is somewhat reminiscent of the American Black Duck but the bill of the black duck is greenish, not black.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 30 inches

Diving duck

Dark wings

Adult male alternate:

Plumage worn in Spring and Summer

Very long, black, central tail feathers

Black head, neck, chest, and back

Large white patch on the head around the eye

White flanks, belly and undertail coverts

Pinkish bill

Adult male basic:

Plumage worn in Fall and Winter

Very long, black, central tail feathers

White crown, neck, back, flanks, and belly

Black chest and lower back

Gray face patch

Black bill with pale near tip

Immature male:

Short, black, central tail feathers

White head and neck with dark crown and face patch

Gray chest and back

Whitish flanks and belly

Black bill with pale near tip

Adult female winter:

White head and neck with dark crown and face patch

Gray back

White flanks and belly

Pale bill

Plumage somewhat darker in summer

Similar species:

The long central tail feathers of the male are diagnostic. Female is whiter overall, especially on the head, than other sealoving ducks. In flight, the dark wings are only also found in scoters and Harlequin Duck but they have darker heads.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches Wingspan: 24 inches

Very small compact diving duck

Very small dark gray bill

Immature female similar to adult female, but immature male has a larger white cheek patch

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Dark glossy head

Large white patch on the head from behind the eye

White breast, belly and flanks

Dark back

Inner wing white and outer wing dark, visible in flight

Adult male basic:

Similar to adult female but with a larger white cheek patch

Adult female:

Dark brown head and body, breast and flanks paler

Oval white patch on face behind eye

White belly

White inner secondaries and otherwise dark wing, visible in flight

Similar species:

Female Bufflehead distinguished from female Harlequin Duck by white secondaries and single white patch behind the eye.

Common goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 31 inches

Medium-sized diving duck

Yellow eye

Gently sloped forehead

Black bill is small, but larger than in Barrow's Goldeneye

White patches on the secondaries and secondary coverts visible in flight

Immature female is similar to the adult female, immature male is like adult female but has a white breast, a darker head and a trace of the male's white patch before the eye

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Glossy greenish head

White circular patch below eye on face

White lower neck, breast, belly and flanks

Dark back

White scapulars with black striping

Adult male basic:

Similar to adult female

Adult female:

Reddish-brown head

Dark-based bill with light patch at tip

Gray body, paler on the breast and darker on the back

White patch on wing split by two dark bands

Similar species:

Barrow's goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 31 inches

Medium-sized diving duck

Yellow eye

Steeply sloped forehead with flatter crown and peak at forward part of crown

Small, stubby bill

White patches on the secondaries and secondary coverts visible in flight

Juvenile similar to adult female but usually with darker bill

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Glossy purplish head

Crescent-shaped white patch between eye and bill

White neck, breast and belly

Dark back

Black scapulars with row of rectangular white spots

Dark tail, upper- and under-tail coverts

White patch on wing split by black bar

Adult male basic:

Eclipse-plumage male like adult female but with darker bill and sometimes darker head

Adult female:

Usually has an all-yellow bill

White patch on wing split by two black bars

Reddish-brown head

Gray body plumage, paler on the breast and darker on the back

Similar species:

Hooded merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 26 inches
Small, compact diving duck
Long, pointed bill with serrated edges
Erectile, fan-like crest extends from back of head
Dark bill and wings
Often cocks its tail like a Ruddy Duck
Immature similar to adult female

Adult male:

Yellow eye
Black head and back
Large white patch in the center of the crest
White breast and belly
Black and white stripes at forward portion of reddish flanks
Dark tail
Inner half of upperwings whitish, bordered by 2 dark bars
Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer
Male in basic eclipse plumage similar to adult female

Adult female:

Brown eye
Cold gray-brown head, neck, flanks, back, and upperwings with paler breast
Faint reddish tinge to crest
White belly

Similar species:

Adult male in alternate plumage is unmistakable. Female vaguely similar to other mergansers but much smaller with cold brown head, with reddish fan-like crest, and dark bill.

Common merganser *Mergus merganser*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 37 inches

Large, sleek diving duck

Long, pointed bill with serrated edges

Red bill is thick at base, tapering towards tip

Sleek, tapered crest, more obvious on females than on males

Brown eye

White secondaries

Immature similar to adult female, often with a less-distinct chin patch

Adult male:

Greenish-black head and upper neck

White breast, flanks and belly

Black back and upperwing coverts with white scapulars

White secondary coverts crossed with indistinct dark bar

Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer

Male in basic eclipse plumage similar to adult female

Adult female:

Red-brown head meets pale breast in crisp line of division

Well-defined white chin

White breast and belly

Pale gray body plumage

Similar species:

Adult male in alternate plumage is somewhat similar to male Red-breasted Merganser but has white breast and flanks, and a less obvious crest. Female, immature and eclipse male distinguished from similarly-plumaged Red-breasted Mergansers by sharply-defined chin, reddish head contrasting with white breast, paler gray plumage, sleeker crest and larger bill. In winter, Common Mergansers, unlike Red-breasted Mergansers, are generally found in freshwater habitats.

Red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 33 inches
Large, sleek diving duck
Long, pointed bill with serrated edges
Thin, red bill seems evenly tapered throughout length
Shaggy crest obvious in both sexes
Red eye
White secondaries
Immature similar to adult female

Adult male:

Greenish-black head
White neck
Reddish breast with dark streaks, bordered on sides by black-and-white patch
Gray flanks, tail, rump and uppertail coverts
Black back
White belly
White secondary coverts
Alternate plumage worn from fall through early summer
Male in basic eclipse plumage like adult female

Adult female:

Red-brown head, paler on throat, but without well-defined chin
Red-brown head fades evenly to paler breast
Gray and white breast and belly
Gray-brown body plumage

Similar species:

Adult male in alternate plumage is similar to male Common Merganser but has reddish breast and gray flanks. Female, immature and eclipse male distinguished from similarly-plumaged Common Mergansers by lack of sharply-defined chin and lack of sharp contrast between reddish head and white breast, and by darker gray plumage, spikier crest, and slimmer bill. In winter, Red-breasted Mergansers are more likely to be found in saltwater habitats than are Common Mergansers.

Masked duck *Nomonyx dominicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches Wingspan: 20 inches
Small, chunky diving duck
Long stiff-tail is often held vertically
Dark wings with white speculum
Immature and male eclipse similar to adult female

Adult male alternate:

Brilliant blue bill
Black face
Brown neck and breast
Brown and black body
Black tail

Adult female:

Dark bill
Dark crown, eyeline, and line on cheek separated by pale lines above and below eyeline
Grayish brown body with pale feather edging

Similar species:

The rare Masked Duck of South Florida and South Texas is most similar to the Ruddy Duck but the adult male Masked Duck in alternate plumage has a dark face. Female, immature, and eclipse-plumaged males have one more dark line on the face than the Ruddy Duck. Most other diving ducks do not have the long, stiff tail of the Masked Duck. Hooded Mergansers can sometimes hold their tails erect like Masked Ducks, but have crests and long thin bills.

Ruddy duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches Wingspan: 23 inches
Small, chunky diving duck
Long stiff-tail is often held vertically
Dark wings
Immature similar to adult female

Adult male alternate:

Alternate plumage worn in Spring and Summer
Brilliant blue bill
Black crown and nape
Rust-red lower neck, breast, back and body
White face
Black tail

Adult male basic(eclipse):

Eclipse plumage worn Fall-Winter
Dark gray bill
Dark cap
Face white, as in alternate plumage
Gray brown neck and body plumage

Adult female:

Like winter male, but with dusky horizontal stripe crossing pale gray cheek patch

Similar species:

Most other diving ducks do not have the long, stiff tail of the Ruddy Duck. Hooded Mergansers can sometimes hold their tails erect like Ruddy Ducks, but have crests and long thin bills. The rare Masked Duck of South Florida and South Texas has a similar shape but adult male in alternate plumage has dark face, and the female, and immature and eclipse-plumaged males have a buff head with a dark cap, dark eyeline and dark line below eye.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches Wingspan: 54 inches

Large, narrow-winged hawk

Flies on flat wings with distinct kink at elbow

Wings taper to a rounded tip

Short hooked beak

White cap

Dark brown eyeline broadening behind eye

Dark brown nape, back and upperwings

Wings from below: flight feathers white barred with black, undersecondary coverts white and underprimary coverts black producing rectangular black mark at wrist

White chin, throat, breast and belly

Brown tail has a number of white bands

Hovers and then plunges into water after fish

Adult male:

Underparts entirely white

Adult female:

Dark necklace of streaks on throat

Immature:

White tips to dark back feathers

Similar species:

Unmarked white belly, wing shape, and flight style make the Osprey instantly recognizable even at a distance.

Hook-billed kite *Chondrohierax uncinatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches
Sexes different
Medium-sized hawk
Broad, rounded wings
Large, hooked beak
Range restricted to southern Texas

Adult male:

Gray head and upperparts
Gray underparts with fine white bars
Primaries heavily barred black and white; dark secondaries
Pale eye

Adult female:

Dark head and neck
Rufous collar
Brown and white barred underparts
Primaries and outer secondaries barred black and white
Rufous wash on upper surface of primaries
Pale eye

Immature:

Similar to adult female
White collar
Underparts less heavily marked than female
Dark eye

Similar species:

Adult Gray Hawk is similar to adult male Hook-billed Kite but Gray Hawk has a smaller bill and paler underwings without the boldly barred primaries. Red-shouldered Hawk has crescent-shaped light patch in the wing. Broad-winged Hawk is similar to female and immature plumages but has a smaller beak, lacks collar, and has more pointed wingtips. Immature accipiters have shorter wings

Swallow-tailed kite *Elanoides forficatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 21 inches Wingspan: 50 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized, graceful, long-winged, long-tailed hawk

Pointed wings

Short, dark, hooked bill

Adult:

Long, deeply forked tail

White head, neck, chest, underwing coverts, belly, and undertail coverts

Slate gray back and upperwings

Black tail and flight feathers

Immature:

Duller than adult with fine streaks on head and breast

Shorter, less deeply-forked tail than adult

Similar species:

Bold black and white plumage make it unmistakable.

White-tailed kite *Elanus leucurus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14.5 inches Wingspan: 40 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized, graceful, long-winged hawk

Pointed wings

Long, squared-off tail

Short, dark, hooked beak

Red eye

Black upperwing coverts appear as black shoulder at rest

Often hovers and soars with wings held in a dihedral

Adult:

White head, chin, throat, chest, belly and underwing coverts

White underwing with primaries darkening on outer wing

Small black wrist mark on underprimary coverts

White tail

Pale gray back and upperwing with flight feathers darkening towards outer wing

Immature:

Brown head, nape and back

White face

Brown streaks on white breast

Dark upperwing with pale tips to the coverts

Dark band at tip of white tail

Similar species:

Gulls and terns are similar in coloration but lack black shoulder and wrist marks and have a different bill shape. Mississippi Kite has a similar shape, but is much darker in all plumages, never having a white breast, white tail, or the black shoulder or wrist marks of the White-tailed Kite.

Snail kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 44 inches

Sexes different

Medium-sized hawk

Long, broad, rounded wings extend beyond tip of tail at rest

Dark, very hooked beak

Long, squared-off tail with white base, broad dark band and gray terminal band

White upper and undertail coverts

Range restricted to southern Florida

Adult male:

Dark gray plumage

Darker flight feathers

Red legs and cere

Adult female:

Dark brown upperparts

Underparts heavily streaked

White supercilium

Yellow to orange legs and cere

Immature similar to adult female

Similar species:

The Northern Harrier is found in similar habitat and has a white rump but the harrier has thinner wings, and does not have white in the tail.

Mississippi kite *Ictinia mississippiensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12.5 inches Wingspan: 36 inches
Sexes similar
Medium-sized, graceful, long-winged hawk
Pointed wings
Long, squared-off tail
Short, dark, hooked beak
Outermost primary about half the length of the longest primary

Adult:

Pale gray head with dark mask at lores
Gray breast, belly, underwing and undertail coverts
Dark gray back, upperwing coverts, primaries, and uppertail coverts
Pale silvery-gray secondaries visible from above
Blackish flight feathers visible from below
Black tail

Immature:

Streaked, brownish head with pale superciliary line
Dark brownish back and upperwing
Breast, belly, and underwing coverts streaked heavily with rich brown
Dark tail has distinct white bands

Subadult:

Head and breast like adult, occasionally with remnants of brown
Underwing coverts streaked heavily with rich brown
Dark tail has distinct white bands

Similar species:

Black-shouldered Kite is similar in size and shape but is whitish about the breast and has a white tail. Kites are somewhat similar in shape to falcons but note the different head patterns. At a distance, Northern Harrier can look similar but its underwings are paler and broader and it has a white rump.

Bald eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 32 inches Wingspan: 80 inches

Sexes similar

Very large, broad-winged, broad-tailed hawk

Rounded wings

Thick, hooked bill

Plucks fish from water with talons

Adult:

White head and upper neck

White tail

Dark brown body plumage

Yellow bill

Immature:

Dark bill and dark cere

Dark brown body plumage, including head and tail

Variable amounts of white on underwing coverts, belly, and back

White head and tail, and dark underwings are gradually acquired in four years

Similar species:

Turkey Vulture has a tiny, unfeathered head, holds its wings in a dihedral, and has contrastingly paler flight feathers. Golden Eagle can be quite similar to immature Balds, or to adults at a distance but is all dark as an adult and as an immature has white restricted to the bases of the flight feathers and the bases of the tail feathers. The white is confined to crisp patches on the wing and tail, and is not blotchily scattered about underwings coverts as in immature Bald Eagles. Immature Golden Eagles have yellow ceres while immature Balds have dark ceres.

Northern harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16.5 inches Wingspan: 42 inches
Medium-sized, long-winged, long-tailed hawk
Rounded wings, can appear pointed while gliding
White rump
Short, dark, hooked beak
Often courses low over marshes and fields on wings held in a strong dihedral
Flat face with owl-like facial disk

Adult male:

Pale gray body plumage, paler on underparts
Darker gray head
Black tips to flight feathers, especially noticeable on the outer primaries
Narrow dark bars on tail

Adult female:

Buff underparts with darker streaks on breast, belly, and underwing coverts
Dark barring on flight feathers most visible from below
Dark patch on inner wing created by dark secondaries and dark secondary covert
Dark brown above
Narrow barring on tail

Immature:

Dark brown streaked head
Orange-buff underparts without streaks
Dark barring on flight feathers most visible from below
Dark patch on inner wing created by dark secondaries and dark secondary covert
Dark brown above
Narrow dark barring on tail

Similar species:

In typical habitat, the harrier is easily recognized by the low, coursing flight, white rump, and wings held at an angle. Rough-legged Hawks occupy similar habitat but have broader wings and a black subterminal tail band. When migrating, harriers can fly at great heights where many of their features become less obvious. The white rump cannot be seen, the wings may not appear held at an angle and the tail may be fanned. The pale underwings with black primary tips of the male make it distinctive. The dark inner wings of females and immatures are a helpful clue. Harriers appear thinner-winged and longer-tailed than buteos and longer-winged than accipiters

Sharp-shinned hawk *Accipiter striatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10.5 inches Wingspan: 21 inches

Sexes similar, but females much larger

Small, broad-winged, long-tailed hawk

Short, dark, hooked beak

Long, narrow tarsi

Short, rounded wings

Long tail is squared-off at tip with prominent corners

Typically flies with several quick snappy wingbeats and a short glide, but also soars

Small rounded head does not project far beyond wings when soaring

Adult:

Red eye

Black cap

Blue-gray back and upperwings

White breast, belly and underwing coverts marked by fine, thin, reddish bars

White undertail coverts

Tail, blue gray above and pale below, barred with black bands

Flight feathers, blue-gray above and pale below, with dark bars

Immature:

Yellow eye

Brown head with indistinct pale supercilium

Brown cap, nape, back, and upperwings

Tail, brown above and pale below, barred with black bands

White underparts streaked extensively with dark brown, almost to the undertail

Similar species:

The Sharp-shinned Hawk is most similar to the Cooper's Hawk. In all plumages, the

Sharp-shinned Hawk has a shorter, less rounded tail with a thinner white tip, slimmer tarsi, a more rounded head that does not project much beyond the wings when soaring and a less snappy wingbeat. Male Sharp-shinned Hawks are obviously smaller than all Cooper's Hawks. Adult Sharp-shinned Hawks have a less well-defined cap while immatures have thicker, more extensive streaking on the breast and belly. Immature Northern Goshawks are quite similar to immature Sharp-shinneds but are much larger, more comparable in size to a buteo. American Kestrel is similar in size but has pointed wingtips and quite different patterns.

Cooper's hawk *Accipiter cooperii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15.5 inches Wingspan: 28 inches

Sexes similar, but females much larger

Medium-sized, broad-winged, long-tailed hawk

Short, dark, hooked beak

Long, thick tarsi appear short at rest because they are usually covered by belly feathers

Short, rounded wings

Very long tail is rounded at tip

Often flies with several quick wingbeats and a short glide, but also soars

Large angular head projects far beyond wings when soaring

Adult:

Red eye

Black cap

Blue-gray back and upperwings

White breast, belly and underwing coverts marked by fine, thin, reddish bars

White undertail coverts

Tail, blue gray above and pale below, barred with black bands

Flight feathers, blue-gray above and pale below, with dark bars

Immature:

Yellow eye

Brown head with indistinct pale supercilium

Brown cap, nape, back, and upperwings

White underparts marked by thin black streaks, concentrated on chest

Tail, brown above and pale below, barred with dark bands

White terminal band

Similar species:

Immature Northern Goshawks are similar in shape and patterning to immature Cooper's

Hawks, but are larger, with proportionately shorter tails, bulkier bodies and thicker black streaking extending all the way to the undertail coverts. Sharp-shinned Hawks are typically smaller, with shorter, squared-off tails and shorter heads that do not project as far when flying. Immature Sharp-shinneds have thicker, denser streaking that extends farther down the belly and a thinner terminal band of white. Adults have less well-defined caps. Immature Red-shouldered Hawks have pale crescents in the wing and shorter tails.

Northern goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 19 inches Wingspan: 42 inches
Sexes similar, but females much larger
Medium-sized, broad-winged, long-tailed hawk
Short, dark, hooked beak
Rounded wings
Long tail rounded at tip
Flies with several flaps and short glide, also soars frequently
Short, dark, hooked beak
Long, very thick tarsi appear short at rest

Adult:

Red eye
Blackish head and face with bold white supercilium
Gray back and upperwings
Pale gray chin, throat, breast, underwing coverts and belly finely vermiculate
White undertail coverts
Tail dark blue-gray above and pale below, barred with dark bands
Flight feathers dark blue-gray above and pale below, barred with black

Immature:

Yellow eye
Brown head with bold white supercilium
Brown back and upperwings
White belly boldly streaked with black to undertail coverts
Tail, brown above and pale below, marked by jagged bars edged narrowly in white

Similar species:

Adults unmistakable when seen well; at a distance, Goshawks distinctively combine the large size of a buteo and the broad-winged, long-tailed shape and quick wingbeats of accipiters. Immature Northern Goshawks are similar in shape and patterning to immature Cooper's, but are much larger, with proportionately shorter tails, bulkier bodies and

thicker black streaking extending all the way to the undertail coverts. Sharp-shinned Hawks are typically much smaller, with shorter, squared-off tails and shorter heads that do not project as far when flying. Immature Red-shouldered Hawk has pale crescents in the wing and a shorter tail.

Gray hawk *Asturina nitida*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 35 inches
Sexes similar
Small buteo
Broad, rounded wings
Hooked beak
Short broad tail
Yellow legs and cere

Adult:

Gray upperparts
Underparts barred gray and white
Dark tail with two white bands, one wider than the other
White uppertail coverts
Pale underwings

Immature:

Dark brown upperparts
Underparts heavily streaked
White supercilium contrasting with dark eyeline
Dark malar streak
Brown tail with numerous darker bands

Similar species:

Gray and white plumage of adult similar only to adult male Hook-billed Kite but kite has larger bill, more boldly marked primaries, and darker underwings. Immature Gray Hawk is similar to immature Broad-winged Hawk and immature accipiters but has white uppertail coverts, stronger face pattern, and more bands on the tail.

Common black-hawk *Buteogallus anthracinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 20 inches Wingspan: 48 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized hawk

Broad rounded wings

Hooked beak

Short broad tail

Adult:

Entirely dark plumage

Yellow legs and cere

Black tail with broad white band and thin white tip

Small white base of primaries-not always visible

Immature:

Dark upperparts

Buffy patches visible on upper surface of primaries

Buffy underparts streaked with brown

Dark face with buffy supercilium and cheek

Numerous thin bands on tail with broad dark terminal band

Similar species:

Adults are distinctive with the very dark plumage and broad white band in the tail. Turkey and Black Vultures and Zone-tailed Hawks are similarly dark but lack the broad white band in the tail. Immatures have buffy patches at the base of the primaries.

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 43 inches
Sexes similar
Large, long-tailed, broad-winged hawk
Short, dark, hooked beak with yellow cere
White uppertail coverts

Adult:

Chocolate-brown head, neck, back, and belly
Chestnut underwing coverts and leg feathers
Dark flight feathers above and below
Chestnut upperwing has dark centers to many of the feathers
White undertail coverts
Black tail with white base and terminal band

Immature:

Chocolate-brown head and neck with sparse pale streaking
White belly streaked with chocolate-brown
Leg feathers pale with chestnut barring
Upperwing and underwing coverts chestnut, with dark centers to many of the feathers
Pale bases to primaries create pale patch in outer wing
Dark tail with narrow white base and terminal band

Similar species:

Dark plumage, chestnut wing coverts, black tail with white base and terminal band
eliminate all other hawks.

Red-shouldered hawk *Buteo lineatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 40 inches
Sexes similar
Short, dark, hooked beak
Large, fairly long-tailed, broad-winged hawk
Pale, translucent crescent at base of primaries

Adult:

Brown head
Reddish breast and underwing coverts
Pale belly barred heavily with reddish
Reddish lesser uppersecondary coverts appear as reddish shoulder at rest
Flight feathers dark above with white barring
Flight feathers pale below with dark barring
Dark tail has several narrow white bars
Florida birds (*B. l. extimus*) are paler about the head and have much paler breasts
California (*B. l. elegans*) and Texas (*B. l. texanus*) birds are much richer red

Immature:

Pale supercilium
Brown head, back and upperwing coverts
Small reddish patch on lesser secondary upperwing coverts
Underwing mostly pale, with faint barring on flight feathers
Dark brown tail with narrow buff bands

Similar species:

Young Red-tailed Hawks can resemble young Red-shoulders, but lack the pale crescents in the outer wing and have a quite different shape, being much broader-winged, broader-tailed and often soaring with more of a dihedral. Adult Broad-winged Hawk is similarly patterned but lacks red shoulders, lacks pale translucent crescents, has black and white bands on tail of even width and a crisp black border to underwing. Immature Broad-winged is quite similar but can be distinguished by the same tail pattern criteria that is useful for adults. In flight note the lack of translucent pale crescents in wings, as well as the quite different shape: Broad-winged Hawks are very broad-winged and short-tailed, while Red-shouldered Hawks have long, narrow wings that flare out at the rear edge and have longer tails

Broad-winged hawk *Buteo platypterus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 33 inches
Sexes similar
Short, dark, hooked beak
Medium-sized, broad-winged, broad-tailed hawk
Short, broad wings somewhat pointed at the tip

Light morph adult:

Dark brown head, nape, upperwing, and back
Pale breast with thick, reddish bars to belly
Pale underwing with thick black margin to trailing edge
Thick black and white bands on tail of even width

Light morph immature:

Dark brown head, back, and upperwing
Pale breast streaked with black
Pale underwing with indistinct, broad, black trailing edge
Tail dark brown above and pale below with dark bands

Dark morph adult:

Rare breeder in Alberta and rare migrant in West and Midwest
Dark chocolate brown head, back, breast, upperwings, belly, and underwing coverts
Black and white bands on tail of even width
Pale silvery flight feathers below are barred with black
Broad, black trailing edge to wings

Dark morph immature:

Dark chocolate brown head, back, upperwings, breast, belly, and undertail coverts often with paler rufous and white streaks
Tail dark above and pale below with narrow dark bands
Pale silvery flight feathers with some barring and often a pale, rectangular window in the outer wing
Indistinct dark margin to trailing edge of wing

Similar species:

Red-shouldered Hawk is similar in adult plumage but has reddish shoulders, a pale crescent in the wings, lacks the distinct black border to the trailing edge of the wing, and the white bands on the tail are much narrower than the black bands. Immatures can be distinguished by shape and crescent-shaped pale window in outer primaries. Dark morph Swainson's Hawk has pale undertail coverts. Other dark buteos are much larger with much broader wings (Red-tailed, Rough-legged, and Ferruginous). Immature dark morph Short-tailed Hawk has darker secondaries that contrast with the pale primaries and does not overlap with the range of the dark morph Broad-winged Hawk.

Short-tailed hawk *Buteo brachyurus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 35 inches
Sexes similar
Small buteo
Broad rounded wings
Hooked beak
Short broad tail
Wingtips help upwards while soaring
Long wings reach end of tail at rest
Range restricted to Florida

Adult-light morph:

Dark upperparts
Dark face with white chin
White underparts and wing linings
Dark secondaries
Barred tail-subterminal band widest
Immature similar to adult but face is streaked and tail bands are of equal width

Adult-dark morph:

Entirely blackish plumage
Whitish bases to primaries contrasting with black wing linings and secondaries
Barred tail-subterminal band widest
Immature similar to adult but underparts mottled with white and tail bands of equal width

Similar species:

Light morph distinctive with entirely white underparts. Dark morph is similar to other dark morph buteos but secondaries are darker than the primaries. At rest, other buteo's wingtips do not reach to the end of the tail. Dark morph Broad-winged Hawk has evenly light flight feathers while dark morph Swainson's Hawk has evenly dark flight feathers.

Swainson's hawk *Buteo swainsoni*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 49 inches

Sexes similar

Short, dark, hooked beak

Large, broad-winged, broad-tailed hawk

Very long-winged for a Buteo, with wings tapering noticeably at the tip

Light morph adult:

Gray-brown head

White chin patch

Reddish breast

White belly and underwing coverts

Dark flight feathers with faint barring

Dark brown back and upperwing

Gray tail, dark above and pale below, barred with narrow dark bars

Light morph immature:

Back and upperwing brown with pale edgings

Pale breast, belly and underwings coverts

Dark streaking on chest, often forms a necklace

Dark flight feathers

Pale supercilium and face with dark eyeline and malar streak

Dark morph adult:

Dark brown head, back and upperwing

Underwing coverts often quite rufous

Flight feathers dark with barring, but paler than underwing coverts

Deep reddish brown breast with brownish barring below

Pale undertail coverts

Dark morph immature:

Like light morph immature but much more heavily streaked

Similar species:

Dark morph adult similar to dark morphs of Rough-legged, Ferruginous, Broad-winged, Short-tailed and Red-tailed Hawks, but the pale undertail coverts set Swainson's apart from all of them. The long wings, with dark (not silvery) flight feathers, the pale undertail coverts and the narrowly banded tail eliminate Broad-winged. The long wings with dark (not silvery) flight feathers and pale undertail coverts eliminate Short-tailed. Most dark morph Red-tailed Hawks have some remnant of a red tail and all Red-tails have a broader-winged, broader-tailed shape and fly with more of a dihedral. Light morph Swainson's is distinctive with its pale underwing coverts that contrast sharply with the dark flight feathers.

White-tailed hawk *Buteo albicaudatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 21 inches Wingspan: 48 inches
Sexes similar
Large buteo
Long, broad, rounded wings appear somewhat pointed at tip
Wings extend at least to tip of tail at rest
Hooked beak
Broad tail
Yellow legs and cere
Sometimes hovers in flight
Wings held in dihedral

Adult:

White tail with wide black subterminal band
White underparts, wing linings, and rump
Faintly barred primaries darker than secondaries
Dark face
Rufous wash on scapulars and coverts

Subadult:

Tail grayish with black subterminal band
Dark belly and white chest
Dark underwing coverts

Immature:

Dark underparts and wing linings
Faintly barred flight feathers
Pale faintly barred tail
White upper and undertail coverts
Vague white patch in center of breast

Similar species:

Adults are distinctive with white underparts and a white tail with a black subterminal band. Immatures are similar to other dark buteos: Harlan's, Rough-legged, Ferruginous, and Swainson's. The tail of the immature White-tailed Hawk is pale with a thin, faint bars and lacks the wider subterminal band of the other species. The immature also has

distinctive white upper and undertail coverts.

Zone-tailed hawk *Buteo albonotatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 19 inches Wingspan: 47 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized hawk

Entirely dark plumage

Long, broad, rounded wings

Wing linings dark with contrasting paler, barred, flight feathers

Hooked beak

Long, broad, dark tail with white bands

Yellow legs and cere

Immature similar to adult but with scattered white mottling on underparts, and gray bands on the tail

Wings held in dihedral

Similar species:

The Zone-tailed Hawk looks remarkably similar to the Turkey Vulture with its dark plumage, wings held in a v, long, narrow wings and tail, and flight feathers appearing paler than the wing linings. Note that the Zone-tailed Hawk has barred flight feathers, white bands in the tail, and a feathered head. The Common Black-Hawk lacks the barred flight feathers and has a more obvious white band in its shorter tail. There are several dark morph hawks that look similar to the Zone-tailed Hawk but lack the white bands in the tail and have different underwing patterns.

Red-tailed hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 48 inches

Sexes similar

Short, dark, hooked beak

Large, broad-winged, broad-tailed hawk

Immatures have notably narrower wings and tail, and appear slimmer

Dark patagial mark on underwing, present on all ages and races, is unique

Blocky translucent area in outer primaries

Flies with a dihedral

Extraordinary geographic variation

Light morph adult:

Brown head, nape, back, and upperwings

White chin, throat, breast, and belly

Dark belly band formed by vertical streaks in band across belly

White underwings have dark carpal bar on leading edge, dark outer primary tips and a dark trailing edge and are otherwise pale with dark bars on the flight feathers on all but the outermost primaries

Tail appears brick red above and pink below

Breast and back pattern vary with geography, with some birds being intermediate between light and dark morphs

Light morph immature:

Like adult, but with less distinct markings below, and brown tail with numerous narrow, dark bands

Dark morph adult:

Wholly dark chocolate underparts, upperparts and underwing coverts with no apparent patagial mark

Pale underside to primaries and secondaries like light morph birds being pale with dark tips and dark bars on the flight feathers

Tail appears brick red above and pink below (like light morph adult)

Breast and back pattern vary with geography, with some birds being intermediate between light and dark morphs

Dark morph immature:

Dark brown head, neck, breast, back, upperwing and underwing coverts are variably

mottled with white and buff
Dark brown tail with numerous darker bars
Paler flight feathers with dark barring on all but the outermost primaries

Harlan's Hawk adult:

Recently split
Entirely blackish body plumage
White necklace of streaks across breast
Tail variably pale gray, gray, or reddish, with dark terminal band

Harlan's Hawk immature:

Entirely blackish body plumage
Flight feathers extensively barred below (including outermost primaries)
Tail pale with numerous dark bars

Krider's Hawk adult:

Paler head and back than Eastern adult
Tail varies from pink to white
Belly band and patagial mark faint or absent

Krider's Hawk immature:

like Krider's adult, but with whitish tail with several dark bands and whitish primaries without barring

Fuerte's Hawk

Like Eastern adult but lacks belly band and is darker on the back and upperwing coverts

Similar species:

Red tail, patagial mark and belly band diagnostic when present. Due to its extreme variability though, the Red-tailed Hawk can be very difficult to identify. Most other light morph buteos are separable by shape and plumage, with Ferruginous Hawk being the most similar. The adult Ferruginous can be identified by its lack of a belly band, rufous leggings, paler flight feathers, lack of a patagial mark, and extensive reddish coloration on the upperwing coverts. The immature Ferruginous is similar to the immature Red-tailed but lacks the dark patagial mark. Dark morph Swainson's has dark flight feathers and white undertail coverts. Rough-legged has unmarked flight feathers and a white comma in the outermost underwing coverts. Other dark morph buteos (Broad-winged, Short-tailed) are smaller with different flight profiles. Immature White-tailed Hawk has a white diamond on its central breast.

Ferruginous hawk *Buteo regalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 20 inches Wingspan: 54 inches
Sexes similar
Short, dark, hooked beak
Large, broad-winged, broad-tailed hawk
Extremely long gape extends to below eye
Legs feathered to toes

Light morph adult:

Pale head, neck, breast, and belly
Variable rufous mottling on underwing coverts
Rufous leg coverts
Tail appears gray, rufous or whitish above and pale below
Gray or blue-gray upperwings have rufous upperwing coverts

Light morph immature:

Pale head, neck, breast, and belly
White leg coverts
Dusky tail with several dark bands
Gray or brown-gray back and upperwings

Dark morph adult:

Entirely dark-brown body plumage
Undersides of flight feathers are pale without barring
White comma in outermost underwing coverts
Tail like light morph adult

Dark morph immature:

Entirely dark brown body plumage
Undersides of flight feathers are pale without barring
White comma in outermost underwing coverts
Tail like light morph immature

Similar species:

Red-tailed Hawk is similar in light morph but typically has belly band, patagial mark, different tail pattern and lacks rufous leggings. White-chested appearance is otherwise distinctive. Dark morph adults are separated from other dark morph buteos by pale, unmarked flight feathers, white comma in underwing coverts, dark undertail coverts and tail pattern. The feathered legs are shared only by Rough-legged Hawk but are difficult to see well.

Rough-legged hawk *Buteo lagopus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 19 inches Wingspan: 52 inches

Large buteo

Long, broad, rounded wings

Hooked beak

Broad tail

Yellow legs and cere

Sometimes hovers in flight

Wings held in slight dihedral

Dark morph adult:

Very dark plumage

Flight feathers barred and paler than wing linings

Dark trailing edge to flight feathers

Dark wrist

Broad, dark, subterminal band on tail

Female has white base to tail; male has dark tail with thin paler bars

Dark morph immature:

Plumage similar to dark morph adult but may be browner

Subterminal tail band less distinct than on adult

Whitish area on upper surface of primaries

Tail pale with indistinct darker bars

Light morph adult:

Wide, dark, subterminal tail band

Upperparts dark brown with some mottling

Dark wrist contrasting with mottled wing linings and paler flight feathers

Females have darker bellies than males; males have darker breasts

Light morph immature:

Plumage similar to adult light morph female

Belly black

White area on upper surface of primaries

Dark subterminal tail band on light tail with dark bars

Similar species:

The Rough-legged Hawk is quite variable with light and dark morphs, male, female, and immature plumages. The broad, dark, subterminal tail band and black wrist patches are diagnostic. Northern Harrier has thinner wings and lacks white in the tail. Dark morph Ferruginous Hawk has white comma in the wrist. Harlan's Hawk has more mottling on the underparts and has a whiter upper surface of the tail.

Golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Identification Tips:

Length: 32 inches Wingspan: 78 inches
Very large, broad-winged, broad-tailed hawk
Sexes similar
Short, dark, hooked beak with yellow cere

Adult:

Golden feathering on nape
Plumage almost entirely dark brown, without white in underwing coverts
Two pale brown median tail bands
Golden band on upperwing coverts

Immature:

Plumage almost entirely dark brown
White bases to outer secondaries and inner primaries produces oval, white patch
White tail with broad, crisp, dark terminal band

Subadult:

Plumage gradually darkens to resemble that of adult, with white in wings disappearing

Similar species:

Turkey Vulture has a tiny, unfeathered head, holds its wings in a dihedral and has contrastingly paler flight feathers while Black Vulture has white outer primaries and quite different, snappy wingbeats. Immature Bald Eagles are similar (very large and dark overall) but differ in fundamental aspects of shape. Golden Eagles are smaller-headed, smaller-billed and somewhat slimmer-winged than Bald Eagles and fly with wings held in a dihedral. Immature Bald Eagles always have patchy white underwings and (occasionally) bellies. Golden Eagles have crisp white patches restricted to the inner primaries and base of tail. Immature Golden Eagles have yellow ceres while immature Balds have dark ceres, a useful mark for perched birds. At great heights, dark morph buteos can be similar but are always shorter-winged with more diffuse white areas on underwings and different tail patterns.

Crested caracara *Caracara cheriway*

Identification Tips:

Length: 21 inches Wingspan: 48 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized, broad-winged, long-tailed hawk

Thick, gray hooked beak, with reddish cere and bare facial skin around eye

Long neck, especially apparent in flight

Long legs

Black cap with slight crest at rear of head

White bases to outer six primaries form white panel on outer wing like that on Black

Vulture

White rump, uppertail and undertail coverts

White tail with black barring and thick terminal band

Black belly

Adult:

Black back

Breast and upper back marked by fine, dark vermiculations

Immature:

Brown back

Pale buff neck and throat

Pale breast streaked with dark brown

Similar species:

Black Vulture has a similar white wing panel on dark wings, but is otherwise quite different in shape and coloration.

American kestrel *Falco sparverius*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches Wingspan: 21 inches

Short, dark, hooked beak

Small, long-tailed hawk

Long, narrow, pointed wings

Gray crown

White cheeks

Two black mustache marks

Black spot at rear of crown on both sides

Seen from below, flight feathers are pale with dark barring

Juveniles and immature females like adult female

Adult male:

Rust patch on crown

Rust nape, breast, back and tail

Rust tail has a broad black subterminal band and a narrow white terminal band

Pale belly

Blue-gray wing coverts

Dark flight feathers with pale subterminal spots creating a string of pearls

Black spots on scapulars, wing coverts and flanks

Adult female:

Pale buff breast streaked with brown

Rust-brown nape, back and wing coverts

Back and wing coverts barred heavily with black

Rust-brown tail with numerous dark bars of even width and a narrow white terminal band

Immature male:

Barred rust-brown back barred heavily with black

Streaked breast

Similar species:

Sharp-shinned Hawk is of similar size, but has rounded wings and much different patterning. Merlin is larger with broader-based wings, lacks rust tones to back and wing coverts, has a single mustache mark and strongly checkered underwings.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches Wingspan: 23 inches
Short, dark, hooked beak
Small, long-tailed hawk
Long, pointed wings, broad at the base
Thin, pale black mustache mark
Underwings checkered with black and white
Juveniles and immature females like adult female
Three distinct races occur in North America

Taiga Merlin (F. c. columbarius)

Breeds in northern Canadian boreal forests from Newfoundland to Alaska and winters in the southern United States; migrants occur frequently along both coasts but are rare inland
Flight feathers dark above
Faint dark mustache mark

Adult male:

Dark blue-gray back, paler than suckleyi but darker than richardsoni
Dark tail has wide, complete, blue-gray bands

Adult female

Dark, brownish back
Brown tail has narrow, complete buffy bands

Prairie Merlin (F. c. richardsonii)

Breeder and resident in prairies of south-central Canada and the upper Midwest of the United States with some moving south to New Mexico
Large spots on flight feathers visible from above
Lacks mustache mark

Adult male:

Pale supercilium
Pale brown cheeks
Pale blue-gray back
Blue gray tail with narrow black bands

Adult female:

Pale supercilium
Pale brown cheeks
Pale brown back
Complete white bands on brown tail

Black Merlin (F.c.suckleyi)

Resident in upper Pacific Coast forests from British Columbia to Alaska, occasionally straying to New Mexico in winter
Very dark back, wings and head
Dark mustache mark
Flight feathers dark above

Adult male:

Blue-gray cast seen in good light
Black tail with incomplete blue-gray bands

Adult female:

Dark tail with very faint tail bands

Similar species:

American Kestrel is similar in size and shape, but has two mustache marks, reddish-brown about head, narrower wings and lacks checkerboard pattern of underwings. Peregrine is much larger with a much bolder mustache mark and not so strongly checkered underwings. Prairie Falcon has a bolder mustache mark, white between the eye and the mustache mark and black axillars

Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 20 inches Wingspan: 48 inches
Very large falcon
Long, broad-based, pointed wings
Short, dark, hooked beak

Adult-gray morph:

Gray upperparts
Underparts white with dark streaks
Flight feathers distinctly paler than wing linings
Thin moustache mark
Pale supercilium
Tail gray with thin white bands
Immature similar to adult but plumage is browner

Adult-white morph:

White plumage
Black barring on back and wings
White tail
Immature similar to adult but plumage is variably darker

Adult-dark morph:

Dark brown upperparts
Underparts heavily streaked
Flight feathers distinctly paler than wing linings
Dark tail
Immature similar to adult

Similar species:

The long, pointed wings and long tail mark this bird as being a falcon. It is most likely to be confused with other large falcons. The white morph Gyrfalcon is distinctive. The darker morphs of the Gyrfalcon are somewhat similar to Prairie and Peregrine Falcons. The Gyrfalcon is larger, has broader wings and tail, and pale flight feathers contrasting with darker wing linings. The Prairie Falcon has a black underwing patch while the Peregrine has evenly dark underwings. At rest, the wingtips of the Gyrfalcon do not reach as far down the tail as the other falcons.

Peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 40 inches
Large falcon
Long, pointed wings extend to tail tip at rest
Short, dark, hooked beak

Adult:

Black cap and moustache
Pale throat and breast
Barred belly
Gray upperparts
Underwings barred black and white
Long, thin tail with gray and white bands
Arctic race is paler; Northwest race is darker

Immature:

Dark brown cap and moustache
Dark brown upperparts
Streaked underparts
Some races have paler heads

Similar species:

The long, pointed wings and long tail mark this bird as being a falcon. It is most likely to be confused with other falcons. Merlin is much smaller, has a less-distinct moustache mark, and a more strongly barred tail. Prairie Falcon has a black underwing patch and lacks the strong moustache mark. Gyrfalcon is larger with broader wings and tail and lacks the bold moustache mark. When perched, other falcons' wings do not reach the end of the tail as they do in the Peregrine.

Prairie falcon *Falco mexicanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 40 inches

Short, dark, hooked beak

Dark brown cap and cheek

Wingtips fall a couple inches short of tail on perched birds

Pale supercilium and patch behind eye

Pale face and throat with thin, dark mustache mark

Dark axillars and underwing coverts

Brown back with paler brown fringes

Brown tail with very faint darker bands

Adult:

Pale brown bars on darker back

Whitish underparts have a few dark streaks on breast and spots on the belly

Immature:

Lacks pale bars on back feathers making back appear darker

More heavily streaked underparts

Similar species:

Merlin is much smaller, has a less-distinct mustache mark, more strongly barred tail and lacks distinctive black mark on underwing of Prairie Falcon. Peregrine Falcon is quite similar but lacks supercilium, white mark behind eye, has thicker mustache mark, has wings that reach tail tip at rest and lacks large black underwing patch.

Plain chachalaca *Ortalis vetula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 26 inches

Sexes similar

Large, small-headed, round-winged, long-tailed, ground-dwelling bird

Plain brown plumage, darker on upperparts

Long dark tail with white tip

Reddish throat not always visible

Range restricted to south Texas

Similar species:

None

Chukar *Alectoris chukar*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Sexes similar

Stocky, ground-dwelling quail with short, rounded wings

Short, thick, red bill

Red eyering

Black band above bill, through the eye and across upper neck

Buff face and throat enclosed by black necklace

Blue-gray crown, nape, breast and back, with a brownish suffusion on the back

White belly

Black bars on pale flanks

Rufous outer tail feathers visible in flight

Red legs and feet

Immatures similar to adults

Similar species:

Gray Partridge has a rusty face without a black necklace, a duller bill and reddish bars on the flanks.

Gray partridge *Perdix perdix*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Sexes similar

Stocky, ground-dwelling partridge with short, rounded wings

Grayish-brown bird without bright markings

Short, thick, pale bill

Tawny cinnamon face with uncrested brown crown and ear patch

Gray nape and breast with fine, dark vermiculations

Brown back and upperwings

Reddish-brown bars on flanks

Rufous outer tail feathers visible in flight

Male has dark brown patch on center of belly, female has smaller or absent marking

Immatures similar to adults but have yellow rather than blue-gray feet

Similar species:

Chukar has red bill, black eyeline and necklace, and black bars on flanks. Northern Bobwhite has different face pattern and is smaller with a grayish tail in flight.

Ring-necked pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 27 inches

Chunky, long-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling bird

Small head and thin neck

Immatures similar to adult female

Some subspecies have green body or white wings, but are very locally introduced

Adult male:

Green head

Pale bill

Unfeathered red facial skin around eye

White ring around neck

Golden plumage with bluish and greenish iridescence and black spots scattered throughout

Long, pointed, golden tail feathers with black barring

Spurred legs

Adult female:

Buffy brown head and underparts

Dark brown back with paler edgings and centers

Black spots and bars scattered about head, neck and flanks

Long, buff-brown, pointed tail

Lacks spurs

Similar species:

Adult male unmistakable. Female similar to a number of species of female grouse but has a much longer, pointed tail and bare legs. Female Sharp-tailed Grouse also has a pointed tail but is shorter-necked, has a slight crest, has white outer tail feathers, a shorter tail and feathered legs. Female Sage Grouse has a dark belly patch and feathered legs.

Ruffed grouse *Bonasa umbellus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized, stocky, round-winged, chicken-like bird

Crest at top of head

Bluish ruffs on sides of neck

Head, neck, and back brown or gray

Breast whitish with brown and black bars and chevrons

Long, squarish tail

Tail brown or gray with narrow black and pale bars and broad blackish subterminal band

Similar species:

Sharp-tailed Grouse is more white and tan than brown or gray and has a long, pointed tail with white outer tail feathers. Spruce and Blue Grouse are darker and lack the black subterminal tail band.

Greater Sage-Grouse *Centrocercus urophasianus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22? inches

Large, rounded-winged, ground-dwelling, chicken-like bird

Long, pointed tail

Immature similar to adult female but paler

Legs are feathered to base of toes

Adult male:

Yellow comb over eye

Blackish-brown throat and v-shaped mark on neck separated by white

White breast

Grayish nape, back and upperwings stippled with white

Black belly

Two olive-green air sacs inflated when displaying

Adult female:

Buffy throat with black markings

Lower throat and breast barred with blackish-brown

Gray-brown plumage mottled with white and darker brown

Dark belly

Similar species:

Gunnison Sage-Grouse very similar but has different range. Large size, grayish plumage, long pointed tail, and black belly eliminate all other grouse species.

Gunnison Sage-Grouse *Centrocercus minimus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22? inches

Large, rounded-winged, ground-dwelling, chicken-like bird

Long, pointed tail

Immature similar to adult female but paler

Legs are feathered to base of toes

Recently separated from Greater Sage-Grouse

Range restricted to southwestern Colorado and nearby southeastern Utah

Adult male:

Yellow comb over eye

Blackish-brown throat and v-shaped mark on neck separated by white

White breast

Grayish nape, back and upperwings stippled with white

Black belly

Two olive-green air sacs inflated when displaying

Adult female:

Buffy throat with black markings

Lower throat and breast barred with blackish-brown

Gray-brown plumage mottled with white and darker brown

Dark belly

Similar species:

Greater Sage-Grouse very similar but has different range, is somewhat larger with different courtship display. Large size, grayish plumage, long pointed tail, and black belly eliminate all other grouse species.

Spruce grouse *Falcipennis canadensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches

Medium-sized, stocky, round-winged, chicken-like bird

Long, squarish tail

Adult male:

Red comb over eye

Black throat with white border

Black breast with white barring

Gray plumage with white spots on belly and black barring on upperparts

White spots on uppertail coverts on Franklin's Grouse

Black tail with pale brown terminal band or black tail feathers in Franklin's Grouse

Adult female:

Gray-brown or reddish-brown plumage with dark-brown and white barring on underparts

Black tail with brown terminal band

Similar species:

The male Spruce Grouse can be distinguished from the Blue Grouse by always having white spotting or barring on the underparts. Blue Grouse is entirely dark below. The brown tip to the tail of most Spruce Grouse is different from the gray or black tip of the Blue Grouse. The Franklin's variety of the Spruce Grouse lacks the brown tip to the tail but has white spotting on the uppertail coverts that the Blue Grouse lacks. Female Spruce Grouse are very similar to female Blue Grouse but have black and white barring on the belly. Also, the terminal band on the tail is brown, not gray as in the Blue Grouse. Ruffed Grouse is browner and paler on the belly with a black subterminal band on the tail.

Willow ptarmigan *Lagopus lagopus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches
Medium-sized, stocky, round-winged, chicken-like bird
Squarish black tail
Small black bill
Legs and toes feathered
Brown or white uppertail coverts cover center of tail

Male alternate:

Red comb over eye
Reddish-brown head and neck
White wings and leg feathering
Body reddish-brown barred with black or white depending on molt stage

Female alternate:

Brown plumage with black spotting and barring
Small red comb over eye

Basic:

Entirely white plumage except for dark brownish tail
Small red comb over eye

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the males are distinctive with their reddish-brown head and neck. Rock and White-tailed Ptarmigan are browner. In all plumages White-tailed Ptarmigan has a white, rather than black tail. Female Willow Ptarmigans are difficult to separate from female Rock Ptarmigans but Rocks have a smaller bill. In basic plumage, the Rock Ptarmigan often has a black eyeline.

Rock ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

Medium-sized, stocky, round-winged, chicken-like bird

Squarish black tail

Small black bill

Legs and toes feathered to tips of toes in winter, base of toes in summer

Brown or white uppertail coverts cover center of tail

Male alternate:

Red comb over eye

White wings and leg feathering

Body brown barred with black or white depending on molt stage

Black tail

Female alternate:

Brown plumage with black spotting and barring

Black tail

Basic:

Entirely white plumage except for black tail

Males, and some females, have black eyeline

Similar species:

The Rock Ptarmigan can be told from all plumages of the White-tailed Ptarmigan by its black, not white, tail. Male Willow Ptarmigans in alternate plumage have a redder plumage while male Rock Ptarmigans in basic plumage have distinctive black eyelines. Females are more difficult to tell apart but the Rock Ptarmigan has somewhat finer markings and a smaller black bill.

White-tailed ptarmigan *Lagopus leucurus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches
Medium-sized, stocky, round-winged, chicken-like bird
Squarish white tail in nonjuvinal plumage
Small black bill
Legs and toes feathered
Brown or white uppertail coverts cover center of tail

Male alternate:

Red comb over eye
White wings, tail and leg feathering
Body brown barred with black or white depending on molt stage

Female alternate:

Brown plumage with black spotting and barring
Small red comb over eye
White wings and tail

Basic:

Entirely white plumage
Small red comb over eye

Similar species:

In all plumages the White-tailed Ptarmigan can be told from the other ptarmigan species by its white, not black, tail.

Blue grouse *Dendragapus obscurus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches

Medium-sized, stocky, round-winged, chicken-like bird

Long, squarish tail

Adult male:

Yellow to orange comb over eye

Yellow or purple-red (Rocky Mountain ssp.) neck sac, inflated in mating display, surrounded by white feathers

Entirely dark plumage with faint mottling about back and upperwings

Gray terminal band on tail (absent in northern Rocky Mountain birds)

Adult female:

Brown plumage with dark brown and white marking to underparts

Brown tail with grayish terminal band

Similar species:

Male Spruce Grouse has a breast barred with white, a barred back and a brown terminal band on the tail. Female Spruce Grouse has a narrow rusty terminal band on the tail and white barring on the underparts. Browner Ruffed Grouse has a black subterminal band on the tail and more white on the underparts

Sharp-tailed grouse *Tympanuchus phasianellus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized, stocky, round-winged, chicken-like bird

Short crest on crown

Narrow, pointed tail with white outer tail feathers

Whitish plumage with darker brown, black and tan chevrons about head, neck, back and underparts

Legs feathered to base of toes

Adult male:

Yellow comb over eye

Pinkish to pale violet neck patch exposed when displaying

Adult female:

Lacks yellow comb and neck patch

Similar species:

Female Ring-necked Pheasant is smaller-headed, with a longer tail that lacks white outer feathers. Prairie-Chickens have barred underparts and shorter tails. Ruffed Grouse is richer brown with a fan-shaped tail that has a black subterminal band.

Greater prairie-chicken *Tympanuchus cupido*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized, stocky, round-winged, chicken-like bird

Short, rounded, dark tail

Buff plumage barred extensively about breast, back, wings and belly with darker bars

Adult male:

Yellow-orange comb over eye

Dark, elongated head feathers can be raised or lain along neck

Circular, orange unfeathered neck patch inflated when displaying

Adult female:

Shorter head feathers and lacks yellow comb and orange neck patch

Similar species:

Lesser Prairie-Chicken is very similar but has pinkish and differently-shaped neck patch and generally paler plumage with more finely barred flanks. The two species almost never overlap in range and habitat. Sharp-tailed Grouse lacks barring on the underparts and has a longer, pointed tail with white outer tail feathers.

Lesser prairie-chicken *Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized, stocky, round-winged, chicken-like bird

Short, rounded, dark tail

Buff plumage barred extensively about breast, back, wings and belly with darker bars

Adult male:

Yellow-orange comb over eye

Dark, elongated head feathers can be raised or lain along neck

Circular, pinkish unfeathered neck patch inflated when displaying

Adult female:

Shorter head feathers and lacks yellow comb and pink neck patch

Similar species:

Lesser Prairie-Chicken is very similar to the Greater Prairie-Chicken but males have a pinkish, not yellow, neck patch. The overall plumage of the Lesser is paler and less heavily barred. The Lesser Prairie-Chicken prefers drier habitats. Sharp-tailed Grouse is similar but has a white, pointed tail and spotted, not barred, underparts.

Wild turkey *Meleagris gallopavo*

Identification Tips:

Length: 34 inches

Very large, small-headed, round-winged, long-tailed, ground-dwelling bird

Unfeathered bluish head and reddish throat

Dark breast, belly and upper back

Iridescent bronze and green wings

Barred primaries

Dark, fan-shaped tail with brown or buff band at tip

Adult male:

Larger head with wattle at throat, caruncled forehead, and projection behind the bill

More iridescent plumage

Similar species:

Too large to be confused with any other bird.

Mountain quail *Oreortyx pictus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches

Sexes similar

Small, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged ground-dwelling bird

Long, straight, black head plume

Gray head and breast

Olive-brown back and tail

Chestnut throat with white border

Chestnut flanks with white bars

Similar species:

Chestnut throat, blue-gray cap, and straight head plume separate it from the other quail species.

Scaled quail *Callipepla squamata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Small, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling bird

Gray-brown head with white-tipped crest

Gray-brown upperwings

Blue-gray about neck, upper back and chest with black scaling

Buff belly scaled with black, is chestnut on males in south Texas

Gray flanks with white streaks

Female has less conspicuous crest and dark brown streaks on sides of face and throat

Immatures similar to female

Similar species:

None

California quail *Callipepla californica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Small, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged ground-dwelling bird

Immature similar to female

Adult male:

Black, forward-tilting, teardrop-shaped crest

Pale buff forehead

Dark brown cap

Black face

White border to face

Blackish nape stippled with white spotting

Dark blue-gray chest

Brown back and upperwings

Buff belly with darker scaly markings and chestnut center

Brown flanks with white streaks

Adult female:

Short, curved, dark brown, teardrop-shaped crest

Gray or brown head, chest, back, and upperwings

Chestnut flanks with white streaks

Pale belly with darker scaly markings

Similar species:

Mountain Quail has chestnut face, unscaled belly, and gray crown. Gambel's Quail lacks pale forehead, stippled nape and scaly belly.

Gambel's quail *Callipepla gambelii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches

Small, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling bird

Immature similar to female

Adult male:

Black, forward-tilting and teardrop-shaped crest

Black forehead

Chestnut crown

Black face

White border to face

Blue-gray nape, chest, back and upperwings

Yellowish belly with black central portion

Rusty-brown flanks with white streaks

Adult female:

Short, curved, dark brown, teardrop-shaped crest

Gray head, chest, back and upperwings

Chestnut flanks with white streaks

Pale belly

Lacks black throat of male

Similar species:

Mountain Quail has chestnut face, straight head plume and gray crown. California Quail has pale forehead, stippled nape and scaly belly.

Northern bobwhite *Colinus virginianus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Small, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling bird

Slight crest at top of head

Adult male:

White chin and supercilium

Black cap, eyeline, nape and throat

Reddish-brown body stippled with white and black spots

Pale belly

Adult female:

Buff throat and supercilium

Dark cap, eyeline, nape and throat

Reddish-brown body with darker back

Black and white streaks and chevrons about underparts and back

Pale belly

Masked Bobwhite:

Dark face

Unmarked cinnamon breast and belly

Reintroduced with limited success to southeast Arizona

Similar species:

Female Montezuma Quail may resemble Northern Bobwhite, but has a head that appears helmeted rather than crested. Montezuma Quail also lacks the strongly contrasting supercilium and throat of Northern Bobwhite and has a darker belly.

Montezuma quail *Cyrtonyx montezumae*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Small, stocky, round-winged, ground-dwelling bird

Short, rounded, brown tail

Adult male:

Bold black and white face pattern

Buff crest that projects backward over nape

Belly dark brown

Flanks and sides of breast gray with white spots

Back brown with buff streaks

Wing coverts brown with black spots

Adult female:

Plumage dull brown, darker on upperparts

Semblance of face pattern of male but mottled brown and buff

Buff crest on nape

Similar species:

The plumage and head shape are quite unlike any other quail. Female somewhat similar to female Northern Bobwhite but has a darker belly.

Yellow rail *Coturnicops noveboracensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Small, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling marsh bird

White secondaries

Short, thick, yellow bill

Black upperparts with thin white fringes to feathers and broad buffy streaks

Dark crown, yellow supercilium, and dark eyeline

Breast buffy yellow

Belly whitish

Flanks and undertail coverts barred black and white

Rarely flies, therefore, rarely seen

Sexes similar

Juvenile darker than adult

Similar species:

The immature Sora is similar to the Yellow Rail but is larger, and has white undertail coverts and darker upperparts that are spotted with white rather than streaked with buff and black. In flight, the Yellow Rail shows white secondaries.

Black rail *Laterallus jamaicensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Very small, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling marsh bird

Black head and breast

Brown nape

Dark back and wing coverts with small white spots

Flanks barred black and white

Short dark bill

Rarely flies, therefore, rarely seen

Sexes similar

Similar species:

Unlikely to be confused with anything but rail chicks. Rail chicks lack white spotting on the upperparts and barring on the flanks.

Clapper rail *Rallus longirostris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches Wingspan: 20 inches

Fairly large, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling marsh bird

Long, slightly decurved bill

Gray-brown cap, hindneck, back and upperwings

Brown back feathers and wing coverts edged with gray

Most often seen walking, rarely flies

Often flicks and cocks its short tail, exposing white undertail coverts

Sexes similar

Juveniles similar to adults, but upperparts darker

Atlantic Coast adult (*R.l.crepitans*):

Gray cheeks

Buff breast

White throat and belly

Flanks barred with white and gray-brown

Gulf Coast (*R.l.scottii*) and West Coast adults (*R.l.levipes* and *R.l.yumanensis*):

Cinnamon breast, brighter in *R.l.levipes*

White or pale throat

Cheeks gray in *R.l.scottii*, brownish-gray in Western subspecies

Flanks barred with white and dark brown

Similar species:

Downy young Clapper Rails can be mistaken for Black Rails but are distinguished by their dark (not red) eyes, the lack of spotting on the back and the lack of barring on the flanks. The smaller Virginia Rail has a red bill and much more contrast between the gray cheeks and the cinnamon underparts. The King Rail is very similar, but is more common in freshwater marshes. Adult King Rails are easily separated from Atlantic Coast Clapper Rails by their reddish brown head, neck and underparts and more sharply-defined barring on flanks. The rich reddish brown wing coverts and tawnier back separate King Rails from all races of Clapper Rail. Hybridization is known with the King Rail.

King rail *Rallus elegans*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 24 inches

Fairly large, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling marsh bird

Long, slightly decurved bill

Most often seen walking, rarely flies

Often flicks and cocks its short tail, exposing white undertail coverts

Sexes similar

Adult:

Rich reddish-brown face, neck, breast, and wing coverts

White throat

Dark brown cap and hindneck

Brown back feathers with tawny edges

Whitish belly

Flanks strongly barred with white and dark brown

Juvenile:

Pale buff head and neck

Back and upperwings darker than in adult

White belly

Barring on flanks less distinct than in adult

Similar species:

Downy young King Rails can be mistaken for Black Rails, but have dark (not red eyes), a white bill, and lack spotting on the back and barring on the flanks. The smaller Virginia Rail has a redder bill and much more contrast between the gray cheeks and the cinnamon underparts. The King Rail is very similar as an adult to the Clapper Rail, but is more frequently found in freshwater marshes. Adults are easily separated from East Coast Clapper Rails by their rich reddish brown head, neck and underparts without contrast between the cheeks and body plumage. The reddish upperwings separate King Rails from all races of Clapper Rail.

Virginia rail *Rallus limicola*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches Wingspan: 14 inches

Fairly small, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling marsh bird

Long, slightly decurved bill

Most often seen walking, rarely flies

Often flicks and cocks short tail while walking, exposing white undertail coverts

Sexes similar

Adult:

Reddish bill

Legs brown or orange

Supraloral stripe and throat whitish

Blue-gray cheeks

Rust-colored breast and belly

Dark crown and back, edged tawny brown

Black and white barred flanks

Chestnut wing

Juvenile:

Bill color duller than in adult

Grayish face

Whitish about foreneck and breast

Gray-black hindneck, back and flanks

Chestnut wing

Barring on flanks indistinct

Similar species:

Downy young Virginia Rails can be mistaken for Black Rails but have dark (not red) eyes, and lack spots on the back and barring on the flanks. King and Clapper Rails are much larger and have duller bills and less contrast between the cheek and underparts.

Other rails have much shorter bills.

Sora Porzana carolina

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.75 inches Wingspan: 12.5 inches

Fairly small, chunky, short-tailed, round-winged, ground-dwelling marsh bird

Short, thick bill

Most often seen walking, rarely flies

Often flicks and cocks short tail while walking, exposing white undertail coverts

Sexes similar

Adult:

Yellow bill

Black lores and throat (paler in basic plumage)

Blue-gray face, sides of neck, and breast

Brownish cap, nape, hindneck, back and upperwings

Whitish belly

Dark brown and white barring on flanks

Juvenile:

Pale yellowish bill

Buff-brown face, foreneck and breast; whitish throat

Brownish cap, nape, hindneck, back and upperwings

White spotting on back and upperwing coverts

Flanks less distinctly barred with white and dark brown

Similar species:

Adult Sora is distinctive with its short, thick yellowish bill, black face and dark gray and brown plumage. Immature is similar to the Yellow Rail but is larger, and has white undertail coverts and darker upperparts that are spotted with white rather than streaked with buff and black. In flight, the Yellow Rail shows white secondaries.

Purple gallinule *Porphyryula martinica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10.5 inches Wingspan: 21 inches

Fairly large, duck-like waterbird with short wings and a short tail

Very short, thick bill

Frequently seen both swimming and walking

Often flicks and cocks short tail while walking, exposing white undertail coverts

Sexes similar

Adult:

Red eyes

Red bill with yellow tip

Pale blue frontal shield above bill

Yellow legs and feet

Purple head, neck, breast and belly

Green back and upperwings

Juvenile:

Brownish eyes

Dark olive or yellowish bill

Buff brown head, neck and breast

Olive-brown back

Greenish upperwings

Whitish belly and throat

Similar species:

In good light, adult is unmistakable, but can be distinguished from adult Common Moorhen by pale forehead shield and lack of white flank stripe. Immature could be confused with immature Common Moorhen but is much paler, especially about the head, and lacks the white flank stripe.

Common moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10.5 inches Wingspan: 21 inches

Fairly large, duck-like waterbird with short wings and a short tail

Very short, thick bill

Frequently seen both swimming and walking

Often flicks and cocks short tail while walking, exposing white outer undertail coverts which are also easily visible while swimming

Sexes similar

Adult:

Red frontal shield above bill

Red bill with a yellow tip

Slate gray head, neck, breast and belly

Brownish back and upperwings

White stripe along upper flanks

Tarsus and feet greenish yellow, tibia red

Juvenile:

Small, dull red frontal shield

Dark bill with dull yellow tip

Pale gray-brown head and underparts

Whitish throat and belly

Dark gray-brown upperparts

White stripe along flanks

Similar species:

In poor light, adult can be confused with Purple Gallinule, but can be distinguished by red forehead shield and white flank stripe. American Coot has a whitish bill, lacks the flank stripe and has a slate gray back. Immature Purple Gallinules are much paler and lack the white flank stripe.

American coot *Fulica americana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches Wingspan: 25 inches

Fairly large, duck-like waterbird with short wings and a short tail

Very short, thick bill

Frequently seen both swimming and walking

Often flicks and cocks short tail while walking, exposing white outer undertail coverts

Sexes similar

Toes have lobed webbing, unlike gallinules

Adult:

White bill with dark reddish ring just before tip

White frontal shield with reddish oval near tip

Slate gray head, neck, back, upperwings, breast and belly

Juvenile:

Lacks the frontal shield of the adult

Horn-colored bill may lack ring near tip

Pale gray-brown head, neck, upperwings, breast and back; feathers on underparts often with paler edges

Similar species:

Common Moorhen is of similar size and shape but has a reddish bill with a yellowish tip, a white stripe along the flanks, and a brownish back.

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches Wingspan: 42 inches

Large long-necked long-legged wading bird; with neck extended in flight

Long, slightly decurved bill with yellowish-orange base and dark tip

Often flicks and cocks short tail while walking a high-stepping gait

Dark brown plumage

Head, neck, and underparts streaked extensively with white

Back and upperwing coverts have bold white spots and streaks

Immature similar to adult, but paler

White-streaked underwing coverts visible in flight

Sexes similar

Similar species:

Ibises have thinner more strongly decurved bills and lack white spots on upperparts.

Immature Night-Herons have much shorter legs and necks, and shorter, thicker bills.

Sandhill crane *Grus canadensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 37 inches Wingspan: 80 inches

Large, long-legged, long-necked bird

Long, pointed bill

Holds neck straight both at rest and in flight, not tucking it in like herons do

Dark gray legs extended in flight

Long, fluffy tertials droop down over tail and primaries

Adult:

Dark bill

Unfeathered red crown and lores

Entirely gray plumage, that often becomes stained with rust or brown, especially about the back and wings

Whitish cheeks and chin

Juvenile:

Feathered crown

Gray-brown plumage mottled with cinnamon

Similar species:

All herons tuck their necks in an S curve while flying and lack the long, fluffy tertials and red crown. The very rare Whooping Crane is white overall with black primaries and a different head pattern.

Whooping crane *Grus americana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 45 inches Wingspan: 90 inches

Very large, long-legged, long-necked bird

Long, pointed bill

Holds neck straight both at rest and in flight, not tucking it in like herons do

Dark legs extended in flight

Long, fluffy tertials droop down over tail and primaries

Black primaries

Rare and local-breeds in NW Canada and winters in coastal Texas, reintroductions attempted in NW United States and Florida

Adult:

Red crown

Black at base of bill extending onto cheek

Entirely white plumage

Juvenile:

White body with scattered brown feathers

Pale brown head and neck

Similar species:

With its huge size and white plumage, the Whooping Crane is unmistakable at close range. In flight, similarly white egrets tuck their necks in an S curve while flying and lack the black primaries. Sandhill Crane is similar in shape but is gray overall.

Black-bellied plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9.5 inches
Medium-sized, long-winged shorebird
White wing stripe
White rump
Short, fairly thick, dark bill
Legs black

Adult alternate

Black face, throat, and breast
White border to black face and throat
Pale gray crown and nape
Black and white spotted back and wings
White belly and undertail coverts

Adult basic

Medium gray upperparts with paler edging
Pale gray breast
White supercilium
White underparts
Black axillars visible in flight

Juvenile

Similar to adult basic but upperparts have more contrast
Black and white spotted tertials
Finely streaked breast
White supercilium
Black axillars visible in flight

Similar species:

This plover is most similar to the Lesser, Greater, and Pacific Golden-Plovers. In alternate plumage, the Black-bellied Plover lacks the gold tones to the upperparts and has white undertail coverts. In basic and juvenile plumages, the Black-bellied Plover is most distinctive in flight with its black axillars, white rump, and white wing stripe, all of which the golden-plovers lack. At rest, the Black-bellied is grayer with a thicker bill.

American golden-plover *Pluvialis dominica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9? inches
Medium-sized, long-winged shorebird
No wing stripe
Underwing coverts and axillars gray
Wingtips extend beyond tail
Dark rump
Short, fairly thin, dark bill
Legs black

Adult alternate

Black face, throat, and underparts
White border to black face and throat
Gold and black spangled crown, nape, back, and wings

Adult basic

Gray-brown upperparts with paler edging
Pale gray breast
White supercilium
Whitish underparts

Juvenile

Similar to adult basic but upperparts have cleaner appearance and more gold spotting
Finely streaked breast

Similar species:

The Black-bellied Plover is quite similar to the American Golden-Plover but has black axillaries, white wing stripe, thicker bill, and white rump in all plumages and white undertail coverts in breeding plumage. In most plumages the Black-bellied is distinctly grayer without any gold coloration. Pacific Golden-Plover is very similar but has white flanks and undertail coverts in breeding plumage. In basic plumage, Pacific has yellower head, supercilium and neck. Rare European Golden-Plover has white flanks and undertail coverts in alternate plumage and a less distinct supercilium in basic plumage. In all plumages, European has shorter wingtips that barely reach the end of the tail.

Pacific golden-plover *Pluvialis fulva*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9? inches
Medium-sized, long-winged shorebird
No wing stripe
Underwing coverts and axillars gray
Wingtips extend beyond tail
Dark rump
Short, fairly thin, dark bill
Legs black

Adult alternate

Black face, throat, breast and belly
White border to black face and throat extends along flanks to undertail coverts
Gold and black spangled crown, nape, back, and wings

Adult basic

Gray-brown upperparts with paler edging and strongly tinged with yellow
Yellow supercilium
Breast and belly pale gray

Juvenile

Similar to adult basic but upperparts have cleaner appearance and more yellow spotting
Finely streaked breast

Similar species:

The Black-bellied Plover is quite similar to the Pacific Golden-Plover but has black axillaries, white wing stripe, thicker bill, and white rump. In most plumages the Black-bellied is distinctly grayer without any gold coloration. American Golden-Plover is very similar but has black flanks and undertail coverts in breeding plumage. In basic and juvenal plumage, Pacific has yellower head and neck, especially the supercilium. Rare European Golden-Plover has shorter wingtips that barely reach the end of the tail and white axillars and underwings.

Mongolian plover *Charadrius mongolus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches
Small shorebird
Short, fairly thin, dark bill
Legs black
Rare stray to West Coast

Adult alternate

Black and white face pattern
Rusty breast band
Gray upperparts and white underparts

Adult basic

Gray upperparts
White underparts
Gray-brown patch at side of breast

Juvenile

Upperparts have pale fringes to feathers

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the rust breast band is diagnostic. In winter and juvenile plumages, the lack of a breastband distinguishes it from other small plovers.

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches
Small shorebird
Short, fairly thin, dark bill
Legs black

Adult alternate

Black bar at side of breast
White forehead and supercilium
Black patches above white forehead and behind eye
Pale gray upperparts

White underparts

Gray upperparts and white underparts

Basic and juvenile plumages are similar to adult but black patches are absent

Similar species:

In all plumages, the similarly-sized Semipalmated Plover has a complete breast band. Piping Plover is quite similar but in alternate plumage has an orange-based bill and different black patterning on the face. In basic and juvenile plumages the Piping has a shorter bill, and orange legs.

Wilson's plover *Charadrius wilsonia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches
Small shorebird
Short, thick, dark bill
Legs flesh-colored
Upperparts medium-gray
Underparts white
White collar

Adult alternate

Broad black breast band
White forehead and supercilium
Black patch above white forehead
Gray crown and cheeks

Adult basic

Incomplete gray breast band
White forehead and supercilium
Gray crown and cheeks

Juvenile

Incomplete gray breast band
White forehead and supercilium
Pale fringes to upperparts
Gray crown and cheeks

Similar species:

The relatively thick black bill and flesh-colored legs distinguish this species from the other small plovers. Killdeer has two breast bands.

Semipalmated plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches
Small shorebird
Short, thin bill
Upperparts brownish-gray
Underparts white
White collar

Adult alternate

Black breast band
Orange legs
Orange base to dark bill
White forehead and line behind eye
Black patch around eye, across forehead, and to bill
Gray crown

Adult basic

Breast band paler
Orange to yellow legs
Dark bill
Facial markings paler

Juvenile

Similar to adult in basic plumage
Upperparts neatly fringed with white
Yellowish legs

Similar species:

The Snowy and Piping Plovers have much paler upperparts and less complete breast bands. Wilson's Plover has a thicker bill and flesh-colored legs. Killdeer has two breast bands.

Piping plover *Charadrius melodus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches
Small shorebird
Short, stubby bill
Upperparts pale gray
Underparts white
White collar
Orange legs

Adult alternate

Thin black breast band
Orange base to dark bill
White forehead
Black line from eye to eye across forehead
Gray crown

Adult basic

Breast band paler and not complete
Dark bill

Juvenile

Similar to adult in basic plumage
Upperparts faintly fringed with white

Similar species:

The pale gray upperparts distinguish the Piping Plover from all other small plovers except the Snowy Plover. The Snowy Plover has a different face pattern in alternate plumage and dark legs and a longer, thinner bill in basic and juvenile plumages.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Medium-sized, long-winged shorebird

Short, fairly thick dark bill

Legs flesh-colored

Red eye ring

White forehead and white stripe behind eye

Brown face; black lores and upper borders to the white forehead and collar

White collar

Brown cap, back and wings

White breast and belly

Two black breast bands

White wing stripe at the bases of the flight feathers is visible in flight

Rust-red rump

Brown tail with black subterminal band, white terminal band and barred, white outer tail feathers

Tail extends beyond wing tips at rest

Sexes similar

Juveniles similar to adult

Similar species:

All other plovers lack the two black breastbands. Very young Killdeer have a single breastband and could be confused with Piping, Wilson's, Snowy or Semipalmated Plovers, but are usually still downy, have black bills (any Piping or Semipalmated Plover having a breastband will also have an orange bill with a black tip), and are colored above like the adult (eliminating the paler Piping and Snowy).

Mountain plover *Charadrius montanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches
Medium-sized, long-tailed, long-winged shorebird
Very short, fairly thick bill marks it as a plover
Yellowish to flesh-colored legs
Juvenile similar to adult
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Black cap
Dark lores
White supercilium
Whitish forehead, foreneck, breast and belly
Pale sandy-brown face, nape, hindneck, back and upperwings; flight feathers darker
Buffy sides to breast
White wingstripe at the base of the secondaries and inner primaries
Tail brown with black subterminal band and whitish outer tail feathers

Adult basic:

Similar to alternate-plumaged adult, but lacks black cap and lores
Often has a broad buffy breast band

Juvenile:

Pale brown face with a paler brown supercilium
Whitish chin, throat, breast and belly
Darker brown back than adult, with pale edgings giving it more of a scaled appearance

Similar species:

Basic-plumaged Pluvialis plovers (Black-bellied, American Golden and Pacific Golden) have larger bills, upperparts spangled with pale spots, spotted breasts and dark legs. Black-bellied Plover has white rump and black wingpits, visible in flight. Golden Plovers have a white wing stripe but lack the black subterminal tail band.

American oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches
Large shorebird
Bright orange, long, thick bill
Head and breast black
Dark gray back and wings
White belly
Large white patch on inner wing
White uppertail coverts and dark tail
Pink legs

Adult

Yellow eye
Orange orbital ring

Juvenile

Eye dark and orbital ring not conspicuous
Dark end of bill
Upperparts faintly fringed with buff

Similar species:

The striking black and white plumage, large size, and bright orange bill make this bird quite unlike any other.

Black oystercatcher *Haematopus bachmani*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches

Large shorebird

Bright orange, long, thick bill

Plumage entirely black

Pink legs

Yellow eye

Orange orbital ring

Juvenile like adult but bill has dark tip and plumage is browner

Similar species:

The striking black plumage, large size, and bright orange bill make this bird quite unlike any other.

Black-necked stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches

Large, very long-legged shorebird

Long, very thin black bill

Pink legs

Juvenile similar to adult female

Legs extend well beyond tail in flight

Adult male:

White spot above eye in dark cap

Black cap, hindneck, nape, back, underwings and upperwings

White tail and rump

White forehead, lores, chin, throat, breast and belly

Adult female:

Similar to adult male, but has a brownish-black back

Juvenile:

Similar to adult female, but brownish back feathers have broad pale brown edges

Similar species:

American Avocet, also has long thin bill and legs, but is larger, and has white on back, dark legs, and rusty or gray head and neck.

American avocet *Recurvirostra americana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches

Large, very long-legged shorebird

Long, very thin, upturned black bill

Blue-gray legs

White rump and tail

Sexes similar, but bill is more strongly recurved in female than in male

Adult alternate:

Rust red head, neck and chest

White lores and eyering

White upper back, breast, belly and tail

White back is bordered by two long, black stripes on the scapulars

Black outer wing and white inner wing, with a black bar through middle of inner wing

Adult basic:

Similar to adult alternate, but head, neck, and chest are grayish

Juvenile:

Gray face

Rusty wash on head and hindneck

Similar species:

Black-necked Stilt also has long thin bill and legs, but is smaller, and has pink legs, and all black wings and back.

Northern jacana *Jacana spinosa*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches
Large shorebird
Fairly short, yellow bill and frontal shield
Long toes
Pale green flight feathers
Rare in south Texas

Adult

Dark plumage, darkest on head

Juvenile

White underparts
White supercilium

Similar species:

None

Greater yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches
Medium-sized long-legged shorebird
Long, thin bill is slightly upturned
Dark bill often has a slightly paler base
Bill length is approximately 1.5 times the length of the head
Bright yellow legs
White tail is crossed with thin black bars
Sexes similar
Juvenile similar to basic-plumaged adult

Adult alternate:

Head, neck, and chest are extensively streaked with black
Pale flanks are barred with black
Whitish belly with sparse dark bars and chevrons
Back and upperwings are dark brown, dappled with black and white
White notches on wing feathers appear as white spots on back
Whitish supercilium and eyering, dusky lores

Adult basic:

Head and neck pale, streaked sparsely with brown
Breast, and to a lesser extent, flanks, streaked and spotted with gray-brown
Dark brown back, with pale flecks and feather edges
Buff notches on wing feathers appear as white spots on back

Similar species:

Solitary Sandpiper is smaller, shorter-billed and has a bolder eye ring, a dark rump, and green legs. The Lesser Yellowlegs is very similar but is smaller, with a straighter and proportionately shorter bill that is uniformly dark. In alternate plumage Lesser Yellowlegs has short, indistinct bars on flanks. The safest way to distinguish the two is the call: a harsh series of three or more notes in Greater Yellowlegs versus a softer, mellower single or double note of the Lesser Yellowlegs

Lesser yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.75 inches
Medium-sized long-legged shorebird
Fairly long, thin, straight bill
Dark bill rarely has a slightly paler base
Bill length roughly equal to head length
Bright yellow legs
White tail crossed with thin black bars
Juvenile similar to basic-plumaged adult
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Head, neck, and chest are finely streaked with black on a pale ground
Whitish supercilium and eyering, dusky lores
Flanks are barred finely with dusky
Whitish belly
Back and upperwings dark brown, dappled with black and white
White notches on wing feathers appear as white spots on back

Adult basic:

Head and neck pale, streaked sparsely with brown
Breast, and to a lesser extent, flanks, streaked and spotted with gray-brown
Dark brown back with pale flecks and feather edges
Buff notches on wing feathers appear as white spots on back

Similar species:

Solitary Sandpiper is smaller, shorter-billed and has a bolder eye ring, a dark rump, and green legs. The Greater Yellowlegs is very similar but is larger, with a slightly upturned and proportionately longer bill. In alternate plumage the Lesser is more finely streaked about the head, neck, and flanks. The safest way to distinguish the two is the call: a harsh series of three or more notes in Greater Yellowlegs versus a softer, mellower single or double note of the Lesser Yellowlegs.

Solitary sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches
Fairly small, long-legged shorebird
Greenish legs
Bold white eye ring
Dark rump
Dark tail has black bars on the white outer tail feathers
Dark underwing
Sexes similar
Juvenile similar to basic-plumaged adult
Usually solitary, often bobs tail

Adult alternate:

Head, neck, and chest streaked with dark brown and white
Dark brown back and upperwings with small white spots
White belly
Whitish supraloral stripe, dark lores

Adult basic:

Smooth gray-brown head and neck fading to white belly
Gray-brown back speckled with white

Similar species:

Yellowlegs are similar but have yellow (not green) legs and white rumps, visible in flight. Spotted Sandpiper has a white wing stripe visible in flight and a dark back without white spots. Two European species, the Green Sandpiper and the Wood Sandpiper are easily separated by tail pattern, underwing color and head pattern.

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13.5 inches
Sexes similar
Large, plump-looking, long-legged shorebird
Long, thick, straight bill
Bill black or blue-gray with darker tip
Blue-gray legs
Bold black and white wing pattern
Whitish tail with dusky terminal band

Adult alternate:

Head, neck, back and upperwings gray-brown mottled with black
Pale stripe above darker lores
Breast and flanks barred extensively with black (in Eastern *C.s.semipalmatus*)
Breast and flanks barred with narrow dark bars (in Western *C.s.inornatus*)
White belly

Adult basic:

Pale gray-brown head, neck, back, upperwings and breast
Pale area above darker lores
White belly

Juvenile:

Warm brown head, neck, back, breast and upperwings
Buff notches on wing feathers appear as white spots on back

Similar species:

Yellowlegs are smaller and slimmer, with much more slender bills and yellow legs, and lack the striking black-and-white wing pattern. Godwits have much longer, thinner, upturned bills with a pink base and dark tip.

Wandering tattler *Heteroscelus incanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.75 inches
Medium-sized shorebird
Medium-sized dark bill
Dark yellow legs
Solid gray upperparts
Indistinct white supercilium
Pumps tail

Adult alternate

Black and white barring on underparts

Adult basic and juvenile

Gray breast
White belly

Similar species:

The rare Gray-tailed Tattler, found in Alaska, is very similar.

Spotted sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches
Fairly small, short-legged shorebird
Yellowish or pinkish legs
White wingstripe visible in flight
Teeters tail when feeding and walking
Distinctive, stiff winged, fluttery flight on bowed wings
Sexes similar
Juvenile similar to basic-plumaged adult

Adult alternate:

Orange bill with a black tip
Pale supercilium and dark eyeline
Brown head, hindneck, back, and upperwings with small black bars
White throat, breast and belly with bold black spots

Adult basic:

Variably dark bill with pale base
Pale brown head with dark eyeline and pale supercilium
Plain dark back, upperwings with dark and buff bars
Sides of breast brown, with finger of white extending up in front of leading edge of wing when at rest
Throat, breast, and belly white, without dark spots

Similar species:

Solitary Sandpiper is larger and has a bold eyering, no wing stripe, white-spotted upperparts and a different flight style. The Eurasian Common Sandpiper, a rare migrant, is very similar to basic and juvenile-plumaged Spotted Sandpipers. The Spotted Sandpiper has a shorter tail, shorter white wing stripe, more barred wing coverts and, as a juvenile, tertials that are marked with buff only at the tip.

Upland sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Long-legged, small-headed, long-necked shorebird of grasslands

Legs yellow

Thin, short bill

Very large dark eye stands out against pale face

Black rump and long tail, with dark bars

Dark outer wing contrasts with brownish inner wing in flight

Often perches on fence posts or stumps

Sexes similar

Adult:

Dark cap

Pale head and neck streaked with brown

Whitish eyering and throat, pale lores

Brown back and wing coverts with pale edges and black bars

Buff neck and breast and white belly with dark chevrons on neck, breast and flanks

Juvenile:

Very pale head without the contrast between the cap and face of the adult

Similar species:

Buff-breasted Sandpiper has a similar shape, but is much smaller and has a plain buff face and underparts, with spots rather than chevrons on sides of neck and breast, a shorter tail, and bright silvery wing linings.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches

Large shorebird

Long decurved bill

Dark legs

Grayish-white and brown head stripes

Brown upperparts with small light and dark spots

Brown streaked neck and breast

White belly and undertail coverts

Plain upperparts, no wing stripe and dark rump (most birds in US)

Juvenile has larger buff spots on the upperparts

Similar species:

Long-billed Curlew is larger, has longer bill, and lacks head stripes. In Alaska, Bristle-thighed Curlew has rusty tail and rump.

Bristle-thighed curlew *Numenius tahitiensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches

Large shorebird

Long decurved bill

Dark legs

Grayish-white and brown head stripes

Brown upperparts with small light and dark spots

White belly and undertail coverts

Plain upperparts, no wing stripe

Rusty rump and tail

United States range restricted to Alaska and Hawaii

Similar species:

Whimbrel is very similar but has a brown, not rust, rump and tail. Other shorebirds with decurved bills lack head stripes.

Long-billed curlew *Numenius americanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 19 inches
Very large, long-necked, small-headed shorebird
Brownish rump and barred tail
Cinnamon wing linings
White eyering, dusky eyeline
Sexes similar

Adult:

Very long, decurved bill
Pale buff head and neck faintly streaked with darker brown
Buff brown underparts with sparse dark streaking on flanks
Dark back with pale edges and notches to feathers
Dark brown outer wing contrasts with paler inner wing in flight

Juvenile:

Much shorter bill, often with less downward curve

Similar species:

Whimbrel has a similar, though shorter, bill, but has bold black head stripes, and lacks cinnamon wing linings. Marbled Godwit is similar but has a straight, somewhat recurved bill.

Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches
Large shorebird
Long straight bill, pink at base and dark at tip
White wing linings with dark border
White wing stripe
White rump and dark tail
Dark legs
Rare stray to North America

Adult alternate

Orange head and breast with white supercilium and dark eyeline
White belly with dark barring
Orange back with black markings

Adult basic

Gray upperparts and breast
White underparts

Juvenile

Similar to adult basic
Wing coverts have black centers and pale fringes
Buffy wash to head and breast

Similar species:

The rare Black-tailed Godwit is similar to the Bar-tailed and Hudsonian Godwits but has a straighter bill. They are easiest to tell apart in flight. The black wing linings of the Hudsonian Godwit are diagnostic. The Bar-tailed lacks a wing stripe and has a white rump patch extending up the back. The Marbled Godwit is larger with buffy underparts. In flight, the Marbled Godwit has plain wings and a dark rump. Dowitchers also have long bills and feed in a similar manner but are smaller with uniform, not pink and dark, bills.

Hudsonian godwit *Limosa haemastica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches
Large shorebird
Long upturned bill, pink at base and dark at tip
Black wing linings contrasting with white bases to flight feathers
White wing stripe
White rump and dark tail
Dark legs

Adult alternate

Gray, streaked head with white supercilium and dark eyeline
Chestnut underparts with dense black and gray barring
Black upperparts with small white spots

Adult basic

Gray upperparts and breast
White underparts

Juvenile

Similar to adult basic
Wing coverts have small black tips
Brownish wash to gray upperparts

Similar species:

Dowitchers also have long bills and feed in a similar manner but are smaller with uniform, not pink and dark, bills. The Marbled Godwit is larger with buffy underparts. In flight, the Marbled Godwit has plain wings and a dark rump. The rare Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits are similar. They are easiest to tell apart in flight. The black wing linings of the Hudsonian Godwit are diagnostic. The Black-tailed has a wider wing stripe while the Bar-tailed Godwit has a white rump patch extending up the back.

Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches
Large shorebird
Long upturned bill, pink at base and dark at tip
Pale wing linings
Upper surface of wings fairly uniform
White rump (dark in Alaskan race) and barred tail
Dark legs
Breeds in Alaska but rare elsewhere in United States

Adult alternate

White supercilium and dark eyeline
Reddish-brown head, neck and underparts
Black upperparts with white and reddish-brown feather edges and spots

Adult basic

Gray upperparts and breast
Wing coverts gray with black streaks
White underparts

Juvenile

Similar to adult basic
Wing coverts boldly marked with black and white
Brownish wash to gray upperparts

Similar species:

Dowitchers also have long bills and feed in a similar manner but are smaller with uniform, not pink and dark, bills. The Marbled Godwit is larger with buffy underparts. In flight, the Marbled Godwit has plain wings and a dark rump. The rare Black-tailed and commoner Hudsonian Godwits are similar and are easiest to tell apart in flight. Both Black-tailed and Hudsonian Godwits have white wing stripes.

Marbled godwit *Limosa fedoa*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches
Very large, long-legged, long-necked shorebird
Very long, slightly recurved bill
Pink-based black-tipped bill
Cinnamon wing linings
Sexes similar
Juvenile similar to adult

Adult alternate

Pale buff head, neck, breast and belly
Pale face with dark loreal stripe
Dark brown barring on breast and flanks
Dark back feathers notched with buff creating a mottled effect
Upperwings brown, with inner wing contrasting with darker outer wing in flight

Adult basic:

Similar to alternate-plumaged adult, but underparts without or with less barring

Similar species:

Long-billed Curlew is similar in plumage, but has a thinner, longer, decurved bill. The Hudsonian Godwit (and the accidental Black-tailed Godwit) has a white wing stripe and a white tail with a black terminal band. The accidental Bar-tailed Godwit is smaller, with unbarred underparts, white wing linings, and a shorter bill that is not so extensively pink-based. Hudsonian, Black-tailed, and Bar-tailed Godwits are grayer in basic plumage and rustier in alternate plumage.

Ruddy turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Small, short-legged shorebird

Short, dark bill is fairly thick with a slight upturn to the lower mandible

Legs are yellow to red

Bold wing pattern visible in flight is produced by a white wing stripe, a white lower back and white at the base of the leading edge of the wing

White tail with black terminal band

Sexes similar

Juvenile is similar to basic-plumaged adults

Adult alternate:

Striking black and white head pattern

Rufous and black back and wings

Black breast with enclosed white patch

White belly

Adult basic:

Gray-brown head and upperparts

White throat

Black breast with enclosed white to gray patch

White belly

Juvenile has pale edges to back and wing coverts

Similar species:

Black Turnstone is similar but darker in basic plumage, has an all dark chest, duller legs, and lacks any trace of rust-red back feathers. Surfbird has yellowish legs and a more uniform body plumage; white wingstripe and white tail with dark terminal band produce a less striking pattern in flight than in turnstones.

Black turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Small, short-legged shorebird

Short, dark bill is fairly thick with a slight upturn to the lower mandible

Legs are usually dark, but occasionally are dark red or pinkish

Bold wing pattern visible in flight is produced by a white wing stripe, a white lower back and white at the base of the leading edge of the wing

White tail with black terminal band

Sexes similar

Juvenile is similar to basic-plumaged adults

Adult alternate:

Black head, chest, upper back, scapulars, and upperwing

White spot at the lores and white supercilium

White spots on sides of neck and breast

White belly

Adult basic:

Dark brown head with generally pale throat and post-ocular stripe, but without pale spot at lores

Blackish-brown chest, back and upperwings

White belly

Similar species:

Ruddy Turnstone is similar but browner in basic plumage, and has a pale area within dark chest bands, and brighter red legs, and may show traces of rust-red back feathers. Surfbird has yellowish legs and paler body plumage; white wingstripe and white tail with dark terminal band produce a less striking pattern in flight than in turnstones.

Surfbird *Aphriza virgata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Small, short-legged shorebird

Short, dark bill is fairly thick with a yellow base to the lower mandible

Yellow legs

White wing stripe

Black subterminal band contrasts with white tail and rump

Sexes similar

Juvenile is similar to basic-plumaged adults

Adult alternate:

Streaked head and back

Rusty scapulars with black tips

Black chevrons on white underparts

Adult basic:

Solid gray upperparts and breast

White belly with irregular gray streaks

Juvenile has pale edges to back and wing coverts

Similar species:

Turnstones are also small shorebirds with short bills that inhabit rocky coasts. In basic plumage, turnstones have slimmer bills and different colored legs (blackish in Black and orange/red in Ruddy). In flight, the Surfbird lacks the white patches in the back and inner wings that the turnstones have. Wandering Tattler and Rock Sandpiper have longer, slimmer bills.

Red knot *Calidris canutus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches
Fairly small shorebird
Medium-length, thin, dark bill
Dark legs
Gray wing stripe
Gray rump and tail
Sexes similar
Juvenile is similar to basic-plumaged adults

Adult alternate:

Reddish face, throat and breast
Gray crown, nape and back
Wing coverts gray and black with reddish spots
White belly with black spots

Adult basic:

Solid gray upperparts and breast
White belly with irregular gray markings along flanks
White supercilium and dark eyeline
Juvenile has fine black and white edges to back and wing coverts creating a scaly look

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the reddish face and breast can also be found in the Curlew Sandpiper and Sanderling. The Curlew Sandpiper has a decurved bill and a white rump while the smaller Sanderling has black spotting on the breast and a bold white wing stripe. In basic and juvenile plumage, it is considerably larger than peeps (Least, Semipalmated, Western, et al). Stilt and Curlew Sandpipers are similar in size but have decurved bills. Yellowlegs are larger with thinner bills and bright yellow legs. In flight, the featureless gray rump, back, tail and plain wings are different from other shorebirds that have white or black rumps and wing stripes.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches
Small shorebird
Medium-length, thin, dark bill
Dark legs
Wide, white wing stripe
Black line on rump extends onto tail
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Reddish head, back and breast with black spots
Gray wings
White belly

Adult basic:

Pale gray head and upperparts
Faint, partial gray breast band
White underparts
Indistinct white supercilium and dark eyeline

Juvenile:

Checkered upperparts
Black patch in front of folded wing
Faint, partial gray breast band
White underparts
Face pattern bolder than adult basic

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, Red Knot and rare Curlew Sandpiper also have a reddish face and breast but are obviously larger and have more extensive red breasts. In basic plumage, the Sanderling is very similar to smaller peeps but has a more obvious wing stripe.

Semipalmated sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Very small shorebird

Short, thin, dark bill not obviously thinner at tip than at base

Dark legs

Thin, white wing stripe

Black line on rump extends onto tail

Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Black back feathers and wing coverts with gray edges

Some black streaking on breast

White underparts

Indistinct white supercilium, gray crown and cheeks

Adult basic:

Back and wing coverts gray with narrow black centers

Faint, partial gray breast band

White underparts

Indistinct white supercilium, gray crown and cheeks

Juvenile:

Black-based back feathers and wing coverts with white and gray edges

May have faint orangish wash to upperparts and breast

Faint, partial gray breast band

White underparts

Dark crown contrasts with pale supercilium

Similar species:

The Semipalmated Sandpiper is one of a group of very similar small shorebirds called peeps. The Sanderling is obviously larger with a bolder wing stripe. White-rumped and Baird's Sandpiper are larger and appear especially longer-winged. Least Sandpiper is browner, has yellow legs (unless stained by mud), and a slightly decurved bill. Western Sandpiper is most similar and is told in alternate plumage by its rufous upperparts and in juvenile plumage by its rufous scapulars. In basic plumage and in-between plumages note that the Western often has an obviously longer, thinner-tipped bill with a droop at the tip, a more square-shaped head, and sometimes retains a few dark chevrons on the flanks. The juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper has a darker crown than the basic plumage Western Sandpiper. The very rare Little and Rufous-necked Stints are more rufous in alternate and juvenile plumages, the Semipalmated lacking any rufous coloration. In basic plumage, they are very similar

Western sandpiper *Calidris mauri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches
Very small shorebird
Short, thin, dark bill thinner at tip than at base and often with a slight droop
Dark legs
Thin, white wing stripe
Black line on rump extends onto tail
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Rufous scapulars, crown and ear coverts
Black back feathers and wing coverts with white edges
Much black streaking and spotting on breast
Black chevrons on flanks
White underparts
Indistinct white supercilium

Adult basic:

Back and wing coverts gray with narrow black centers
Faint, partial gray breast band
White underparts
Indistinct white supercilium, gray crown and cheeks

Juvenile:

Rufous scapulars
Black-based back feathers and wing coverts with white and gray edges
Faint, partial gray breast band
White underparts
Indistinct gray crown and pale supercilium

Similar species:

The Western Sandpiper is one of a group of very similar small shorebirds called peeps. The Sanderling is obviously larger with a bolder wing stripe. White-rumped and Baird's Sandpiper are larger and appear especially longer-winged. Least Sandpiper is browner, has yellow legs (unless stained by mud), and a slightly decurved bill. Western Sandpiper is told from the similar Semipalmated Sandpiper in alternate plumage by its rufous upperparts and in juvenile plumage by its rufous scapulars. In basic plumage and in-between plumages note that the Western often has an obviously longer, thinner-tipped bill

with a droop at the tip, a more square-shaped head, and sometimes retains a few dark chevrons on the flanks. The juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper has a darker crown than the basic plumage Western Sandpiper. The very rare Little and Rufous-necked Stints have rufous in the throat in alternate plumage, and lack the rufous scapulars in juvenile plumage. In basic plumage, they are very similar

Least sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches
Very small shorebird
Short, thin, dark bill slightly decurved
Yellow legs
Thin, white wing stripe
Black line on rump extends onto tail
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Brown head
Black back feathers and wing coverts with brown edges
Brown breast with black spotting
White underparts
Indistinct white supercilium with darker crown and eyeline

Adult basic:

Similar to adult alternate but plumage gray-brown
Gray-brown breast band
White underparts
Indistinct white supercilium with darker crown and eyeline

Juvenile:

Black-based back feathers and wing coverts with bright rusty edges
White V on back
Breast with golden cast and fine streaking
White underparts
Rusty crown and pale supercilium

Similar species:

The Least Sandpiper is one of a group of very similar small shorebirds called peeps but the only common one with yellow legs, a brown plumage, and a thin, slightly decurved bill. The rare Long-toed Stint is very similar (see Jonsson & Grant, 1984). The Pectoral Sandpiper is also brown with yellow legs but is larger with a crisp, squared-off division between the brown breast and white belly.

White-rumped sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches
Small shorebird
Short, thin, dark bill slightly decurved
Black legs
White rump
Thin, white wing stripe
Long wings
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Brownish tinge to crown and face
Pale supercilium
Black back feathers and wing coverts with gray edges
Streaked breast and flanks
White underparts

Adult basic:

Upperparts dark gray with black feather centers
Dark gray breast
White underparts
White supercilium with darker crown and eyeline

Juvenile:

Black-based back feathers and wing coverts with brown edges to scapulars and whiter edges to wing coverts
White V on back
Finely streaked breast
White underparts
White supercilium with brownish crown and pale face

Similar species:

The White-rumped Sandpiper is one of a group of very similar small shorebirds called peeps. In flight, it can be differentiated from the other species by its white rump. At rest, it is larger and noticeably longer-winged than all but the Baird's Sandpiper. In alternate plumage, it is more heavily streaked than the other species, especially on the flanks. In basic plumage, the upperparts and breast are much darker than the other peeps. The Baird's Sandpiper is a paler brown in all plumages.

Baird's sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches
Small shorebird
Short, thin, dark bill
Black legs
Black patch on rump extending onto tail
Thin, white wing stripe
Long wings
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Pale brown head with dark streaks
Pale supercilium
Black back feathers and wing coverts with pale brown edges
Pale brown breast with fine streaks
White underparts

Adult basic:

Upperparts pale gray with black feather centers
Dark gray-brown breast with fine dark streaks
White underparts
Indistinct white supercilium with darker crown and eyeline

Juvenile:

Black-based back feathers and wing coverts with pale brown edges giving a scaly look
Pale brown breast with fine dark spots
White underparts

Similar species:

The Baird's Sandpiper is one of a group of very similar small shorebirds called peeps. It appears browner than all but the Least Sandpiper. The Least Sandpiper is smaller, with shorter wings, and yellow legs. The White-rumped Sandpiper is most similar in size, but has a white rump and is grayer. Pectoral Sandpiper is also brown, but has yellow legs and a very abrupt demarcation between the dark chest and white belly.

Pectoral sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches
Medium-sized shorebird
Medium-sized, thin, dark bill
Yellow legs
Black patch on rump extending onto tail
Thin, white wing stripe
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Brown head with dark streaks
Pale supercilium
Black back feathers and wing coverts with brown edges
Brown breast with fine streaks ending abruptly and contrasting with white underparts

Adult basic:

Similar to adult alternate
Upperparts a duller brown

Juvenile:

Similar to adult alternate
Back feathers and wing coverts with pale brown, rust, or golden edges
White 'V's on back
Dark rusty crown

Similar species:

With its abrupt demarcation between the brown breast and the white underparts and yellow legs, the Pectoral Sandpiper is quite distinctive. It is larger than the peeps but shorter-billed and shorter-legged than dowitchers, yellowlegs, and Stilt Sandpipers. The rare Sharp-tailed Sandpiper is quite similar, but has more markings on the flanks. Juveniles have a redder crown and a more obvious supercilium.

Purple sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches
Small shorebird
Medium-sized, thin, dark bill with yellow base
Yellow legs
Black patch on rump extending onto tail
Thin, white wing stripe
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Dark gray streaked head
Pale indistinct supercilium with dark cheeks and crown
Black back feathers and wing coverts with thin white edges
Dark gray breast with dark streaks and spots extending onto white underparts

Adult basic:

Dark gray head without darker streaks
Dark gray breast with streaks extending onto flanks
Very dark back with thin gray edges

Juvenile:

Similar to adult alternate
Black back feathers and wing coverts with neat white edges
Dark streaking on breast

Similar species:

This sandpiper is most likely to be found on rocks in coastal areas. Other small shorebirds are paler and lack the yellow legs and yellow-based bill. In flight, turnstones and sanderlings have more white in the wings.

Rock sandpiper *Calidris ptilocnemis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches
Small shorebird
Medium-sized, thin, dark bill with yellow base
Yellow legs
Black patch on rump extending onto tail
Thin, white wing stripe
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Brown and white head
Pale indistinct supercilium with brown cheeks and crown
Black back feathers and wing coverts with rust edges
Brown breast with dark spots
Black belly and white undertail coverts

Adult basic:

Dark gray head without darker streaks
Dark gray breast with streaks extending onto flanks
Very dark back with thin gray edges

Juvenile:

Similar to adult basic
Upperparts browner than basic adult

Similar species:

This sandpiper is most likely to be found on rocks in coastal areas. Other small shorebirds are paler and lack the yellow legs and yellow-based bill. In flight, turnstones, sanderlings, and surfbirds have more white in the wings. The Purple Sandpiper is very similar in basic plumage but is found on the Atlantic Coast.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches
Medium-sized shorebird
Medium-sized, thin, dark bill with droop at tip
Black legs
Black patch on rump extending onto tail
White wing stripe
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

White head and breast with faint black streaks and spots
Black belly
Rusty mantle with black spots
White undertail coverts and flanks

Adult basic:

Gray head with pale indistinct supercilium
Gray breast with indistinct streaking
Gray upperparts
White belly and undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Similar to adult basic
Upperparts rustier than basic adult
Head and breast with brownish wash

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the black belly is also found in the Rock Sandpiper. The Rock Sandpiper has less extensive black on the belly and yellow legs. In basic and juvenile plumages, the Dunlin is similar to several other species. It is a darker gray than Western Sandpiper and Sanderling. The Dunlin lacks the white rump of White-rumped and Curlew Sandpiper. Purple Sandpiper is darker gray above and has yellow legs. In flight, the Dunlin has a more substantial wing stripe than peep.

Curlew sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches
Medium-sized shorebird
Decurved bill
Black legs
White rump
White wing stripe
Sexes similar
Rare in United States

Adult alternate:

Reddish-brown head, mantle, breast, and belly
Black bases to back feathers
White undertail coverts with dark spots

Adult basic:

Gray head with white supercilium
Gray breast with indistinct streaking
Gray upperparts
White belly and undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Similar to adult basic
Mantle black with thin pale white edging
Head and breast with brownish wash

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the reddish-brown plumage is diagnostic. The Dunlin also has a decurved bill but lacks a white rump. Stilt Sandpiper has greenish legs and a thicker bill. Other similar-sized shorebirds lack the decurved bill.

Stilt sandpiper *Calidris himantipus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25 inches
Medium-sized shorebird
Long bill decurved at tip
Greenish legs
White rump
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Reddish-brown crown and cheeks
White supercilium
Black bases to back feathers with thin pale edges
Neck and breast heavily spotted with black
Underparts heavily barred with black

Adult basic:

Gray head with white supercilium
Gray breast with indistinct streaking
Gray upperparts
White belly and undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Similar to adult basic
Mantle feathers with black bases and contrasting buff and rust edges
Head and breast with brownish wash

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the heavy barring on the underparts is diagnostic. Juvenile and basic plumages are similar to other species. Dowitchers have longer, straighter bills while yellowlegs have brighter, yellow legs and straight bills. Dunlins and Curlew Sandpipers also have decurved bills but have dark legs and thinner bills. Dunlin has a dark rump.

Buff-breasted sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches

Medium-sized shorebird

Short, straight dark bill

Yellow legs

Buff plumage

Mantle has black-centered feathers

Small black spots on side of breast

White underwings

Sexes similar

Juvenile similar to adult but back feathers edged in white

Similar species:

The unmarked buff underparts of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper separate it from other brown shorebirds with streaked or spotted underparts: Baird's Sandpiper, juvenile Ruff, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Upland Sandpiper. In flight, the white wing linings are diagnostic.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches
Medium-sized shorebird
Slightly decurved short bill
White patches on sides of dark rump
Rare but regular stray to North America

Adult male alternate

Extremely variable plumage
Brightly colored ruffs on head (black, white, brown, orange, etc)
Brightly colored mantle
Black belly (often)
Dark bill often has orange base, sometimes entirely orange
Orange legs

Adult female alternate

Often called Reeve
Brown head
Black mantle with pale feather edges and internal markings, variable
Dark barring on brown breast
White belly and undertail coverts
Dark bill often has orange base
Orange legs

Adult basic

Dull gray upperparts with paler feather edges
White belly
Yellowish legs

Juvenile

Buffy head and breast
Dark mantle with buffy feather edges
Dark bill with somewhat paler base
Yellowish legs

Similar species:

The Ruff is larger, browner, and shorter-billed than many shorebirds. In breeding plumage, the male is diagnostic. Molting males often have orange-based bills and dark splotches on the underparts. Females are somewhat similar to Pectoral Sandpipers but lack the clean breast demarcation and the pale supercilium. Buff-breasted Sandpipers are smaller than juvenile Ruffs and lack a white belly.

Short-billed dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9.5 inches
Medium-sized shorebird
Long, straight bill
Dull, yellowish legs
White rump extends in wedge onto back
Tail barred black and white
Sexes similar
Several different races

Adult alternate:

Reddish underparts
Dark crown and eyeline with reddish supercilium
Black bases to back feathers with reddish edges
hendersoni race has reddish belly and black spots on sides of breast and flanks
griseus race has white belly and densely spotted foreneck and barred flanks
caurinus race has small white belly and densely spotted foreneck

Adult basic:

Pale gray head with white supercilium
Pale gray breast with faint spotting
Gray upperparts
White belly and undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Back feathers dark with broad orange edges
Tertials dark with orange stripes
Head and breast with orange wash and scattered spots

Similar species:

The most distinctive feature of dowitchers is their long bill. Godwits also have extremely long bills but their bills are bicolored and they are larger. In flight, dowitchers can be picked out of mixed shorebird flocks by the white v extending up the back. The Long-billed Dowitcher is very similar to the Short-billed Dowitcher. In alternate plumage, the Long-billed Dowitcher has barred flanks and a reddish belly; some races of the Short-billed Dowitcher have barred flanks and some have reddish bellies but not on the same bird. Juvenile Short-billed Dowitchers have a more orange plumage than juvenile Long-billed Dowitchers. The best field mark for separating the juvenile plumages is the appearance of the tertials. In the Short-billed they have internal orange stripes while in the Long-billed they have a thin brown fringe with no internal markings. Winter plumage dowitchers are very similar.

Long-billed dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches
Medium-sized shorebird
Long, straight bill
Dull, yellowish legs
White rump extends in wedge onto back
Tail barred black and white
Sexes similar

Adult alternate:

Reddish underparts with black spots on throat and breast and barred belly and flanks
Dark crown and eyeline with reddish supercilium
Black bases to back feathers with reddish edges

Adult basic:

Pale gray head with white supercilium
Pale gray breast with faint spotting
Gray upperparts
White belly and undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Mantle feathers dark with thin brown edges
Head and breast with brown wash and scattered spots

Similar species:

The most distinctive feature of dowitchers is their long bill. Godwits also have extremely long bills but their bills are bicolored and they are larger. In flight, dowitchers can be picked out of mixed shorebird flocks by the white v extending up the back. The Long-billed Dowitcher is very similar to the Short-billed Dowitcher. In alternate plumage, the Long-billed Dowitcher has barred flanks and a reddish belly; some races of the Short-billed Dowitcher have barred flanks and some have reddish bellies but not on the same bird. Juvenile Short-billed Dowitchers have a more orange plumage than juvenile Long-billed Dowitchers. The best field mark for separating the juvenile plumages is the appearance of the tertials. In the Short-billed they have internal orange stripes while in the Long-billed they have a thin brown fringe with no internal markings. Winter plumage dowitchers are very similar.

Common snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches

Stocky, short-legged, pointed-winged shorebird

Explosive takeoff when flushed, rapid zigzag flight

Very long, straight bill

Legs olive

Head patterned with alternating dark and pale stripes

Pale breast with darker spots and bars

Strongly patterned back with several buffy, longitudinal stripes

Rusty brown rump and tail visible in flight

White belly, dark bars on flanks

Upperwings dark, secondaries with white tips

Found primarily in marshes and wet fields

Sexes similar

Juvenile similar to adult

Similar species:

American Woodcock has a plain, buffy breast, rounded wings and a distinctive head pattern. Dowitchers are similar in size and shape but lack prominent crown and back stripes, and have a white rump and barred tail.

American woodcock *Scolopax minor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.25 inches

Dumpy, short-legged, short-tailed, rounded-winged shorebird

Explosive takeoff when flushed, wings make twittering sound in flight

Very long bill

Very large, dark eye set high in head

Buff-brown head, breast and belly buff to pale cinnamon

Black nape crossed by pale lines

Dark eyeline and auricular stripe

Gray-brown back, with black and chestnut feathering interspersed between two pale Vs

Upperwings reddish-brown; underwings brown, with rusty wing linings

Rusty rump; dark rectrices tipped gray/white

Found in woodlands and shrubby fields

Sexes similar

Juvenile similar to adult

Similar species:

Common Snipe is more slender and browner, without the crossbars on nape. In flight, the Common Snipe has much more pointed wings.

Wilson's phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches
Fairly small, long-legged shorebird
Often swims, spinning about and picking at the water
Thin, straight, black bill much longer than head
White rump, pale gray tail
Wings dark, unstriped

Adult female alternate:

Black legs
Pale gray crown and nape, hindneck whiter
Thick, dark eyeline extends down neck, becoming chestnut, and turns onto back, forming V
White throat and supercilium
Rich rusty foreneck
White breast and belly
Gray back and upperwings
Rusty stripe at base of wings

Adult male alternate:

Plumage duller than in female alternate
Black legs
Dark brown crown and eyeline, extending down neck and onto back
Back and upperwings gray-brown
White throat, supercilium, and hindneck
Pale rusty foreneck
White breast and belly

Adult basic:

Yellowish legs
Gray crown, hindneck, and back
Pale face with variable black stripe through eye
White throat, breast and belly

Juvenile:

Similar to the basic-plumaged adult but browner
More distinct face pattern with a prominent dark cap and dark eye stripe
Buffy wash to the neck and chest

Pale buffy edges to feathers on back and upperwing coverts

Similar species:

Yellowlegs have longer, brighter yellow legs, spotted upperparts, streaks and bars about head and have a barred tail. Red-necked and Red Phalaropes both have wing stripes and dark rumps and tails, as well as shorter bills. Basic-plumaged Stilt Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope are similar, but Stilt Sandpiper has longer legs and dusky streaks on chest and flanks.

Red-necked phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches
Fairly small, long-legged shorebird
Often swims, spinning about and picking at the water
Thin, straight, black bill
Black legs
Dark-centered rump
Thin white stripe in wing

Adult female alternate:

Dark gray head, nape, breast, flanks and back
White throat with reddish lower border
Buff streaks on back
White underparts
Adult male alternate similar but considerably duller

Adult basic:

Gray crown and upperparts
Black eye patch
White underparts

Juvenile:

Similar to the basic-plumaged adult
More distinct face pattern with a prominent dark cap and dark eye stripe
Buffy wash to the neck and chest
Pale buffy edges to feathers on back and upperwing coverts

Similar species:

Yellowlegs have longer, brighter yellow legs, spotted upperparts, streaks and bars about head and have a barred tail. Wilson's Phalarope lacks wing stripe, has a white rump and tail, as well as a longer bill. Basic-plumaged Stilt Sandpiper is similar, but Stilt Sandpiper has longer legs, dusky streaks on chest and flanks, and lacks the black patch around the eye. Red Phalarope is similar in juvenile and basic plumages but has a thicker bill and a wider white wing stripe.

Red phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches
Fairly small shorebird
Often swims, spinning about and picking at the water
Thick, straight bill
Dark-centered rump
Wide white stripe in wing

Adult female alternate:

Red underparts and neck
White face and dark crown
Black back with buff feather edges
Yellow bill
Adult male alternate similar but considerably duller

Adult basic:

Gray crown and upperparts
Black eye patch
White underparts
Dark bill

Juvenile:

Similar to the basic-plumaged adult
More distinct face pattern with a prominent dark cap and dark eye stripe
Buff wash to the neck and chest
White edges to feathers on back and upperwing coverts

Similar species:

Yellowlegs have longer, brighter yellow legs, spotted upperparts, streaks and bars about head and have a barred tail. Wilson's Phalarope lacks wing stripe, has a white rump and tail, as well as a longer bill. Basic-plumaged Stilt Sandpiper is similar, but Stilt Sandpiper has longer legs, dusky streaks on chest and flanks, and lacks the black patch around the eye. Red-necked Phalarope is similar in juvenile and basic plumages but has a thinner bill and a thinner white wing stripe.

Great skua *Stercorarius skua*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17.5 inches Wingspan: 16 inches

Sexes similar

Large, heavyset, thick-necked with broad-based wings

Thick, heavy bill

Broad white patch at base of primaries

Short broad tail

Sometimes chases other birds to steal their food

Juveniles take several years to reach adult plumage

Most often seen far offshore

Adult:

Reddish-brown plumage

Heavy streaking on body and wing coverts

Juvenile:

Less streaked than adult

Similar species:

Skuas are similar to jaegers but are bulkier, thicker-necked, and with more prominent wing patches. South Polar Skua is similar but lacks heavy streaking on the body and wing coverts and lacks reddish-brown tones to plumage instead being dark brown to grayish.

South polar skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Sexes similar

Large, heavyset, thick-necked with broad-based wings

Thick, heavy bill

Broad white patch at base of primaries

Short broad tail

Sometimes chases other birds to steal their food

Juveniles take several years to reach adult plumage

Most often seen far offshore

Adult:

Dark brown to gray plumage

Light morph has pale head

Juvenile:

Darker than adult

Similar species:

Skuas are similar to jaegers but are bulkier, thicker-necked, and with more prominent wing patches. South Polar Skua is similar to Great Skua but lacks heavy streaking on the body and wing coverts and lacks reddish-brown tones to plumage instead being dark brown to grayish.

Pomarine jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches Wingspan: 48 inches

Sexes similar

Large jaeger, heavyset, thick-necked with broad-based wings

Thick, heavy bill with prominent gonydeal angle

Sometimes chases other birds to steal their food

Powerful, yet agile, flight

Juveniles take several years to reach adult plumage

Light and dark color morphs

Mainly pelagic but occasionally seen inland

Adult light morph:

Central tail feathers elongated and spatulate

Heavy pale-based bill

Black cap covers eye and crosses chin

Yellow area below cap

White nape and chin

Very dark upperparts

White underparts with dark mottled breastband, flanks, and undertail coverts

White patch at base of primaries; diffuse on underside and along the shafts from the upperside

Adult dark morph:

Central tail feathers elongated and spatulate

Heavy pale-based bill

Entirely dark plumage except for white bases of primaries

Juvenile:

Rounded, central tail feathers barely project beyond rest of tail

Upperparts dark with pale edgings

Primaries dark with pale shaft streaks on outer 5-7 primaries

Head, body, and wing linings barred-belly may be pale

Uppertail coverts barred black and white

Subadult:

Variable; gradually acquires adult plumage

Occurs in both dark and light color morphs

Best identified by tail feather shape, size, and bill shape

Similar species:

Young Pomarine Jaegers look superficially like first-year Herring Gulls but have a more powerful, direct flight and white patches on the primaries visible from above and below the wing. Skuas are similar as well but are bulkier, thicker-necked, with much more prominent wing patches. Jaegers look most similar to each other. Size and shape often are the best way to distinguish the three species: note the Pomarine's larger size, heavyset body, broad-based wings, and thick, angular bill. Adult Pomarines can be safely identified by either their long, spoon-shaped central tail feathers or their mottled breast band. The light morph has a heavier breast band than the Parasitic Jaeger. Juvenile jaegers are very difficult to tell apart but the tail feather shape is still diagnostic though subtle and the uppertail covert pattern is useful as well. Long-tailed Jaeger is very small and dainty and should rarely be confused with Pomarine.

Parasitic jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized jaeger, not particularly heavyset or dainty

Bill not particularly thick with gonys 2/3 of the way to the tip

Mainly pelagic but occasionally seen inland

Sometimes chases other birds to steal their food

Powerful, yet agile, flight

Juveniles take several years to reach adult plumage

Light and dark color morphs

Adult light morph:

Central tail feathers elongated and pointed, but are not as long as the tail

Black cap covers eye and crosses chin

Yellow area below cap

White nape

Very dark upperparts

White underparts with smooth pale gray breastband and dark undertail coverts

White patch at base of primaries; diffuse on underside and along the shafts from the upperside

Pale-based bill

Adult dark morph:

Central tail feathers elongated and pointed, but are not as long as the tail

Pale-based bill

Entirely dark plumage except for white base of primaries

Juvenile:

Pointed central tail feathers barely project beyond rest of tail

Head, body, and wing linings barred-belly may be pale

Often cinnamon colored

Upperparts with pale edgings

Primaries dark, with white streaks on outer 3-5 primaries

Primaries usually pale-tipped

Uppertail coverts with wavy bars, often cinnamon colored

Subadult:

Variable; gradually acquires adult plumage

Occurs in both dark and light color morphs
Best identified by tail feather shape, size, and bill shape

Similar species:

Young Parasitic Jaegers look superficially like first-year Herring Gulls but have a more powerful, direct flight and white patches on the primaries visible from above and below the wing. Skuas are much bigger, heavier, thicker-necked, and have bolder white wing patches. Jaegers look most similar to each other. Adult Parasitics can be safely identified either by their long, pointed central tail feathers or smooth gray breast band. The adult Long-tailed Jaeger has longer pointed tail feathers, is pale gray above and lacks the breast band. Juvenile and subadult jaegers are very difficult to tell apart. All three jaegers differ in size and structure, but Parasitic is most difficult to identify since it can be confused with the larger Pomarine or smaller Long-tailed jaegers. Long-tailed is very tern-like and has a dainty bill which the gonys appears at or near the midpoint of the bill. Pomarine is much bigger and bulkier, almost skua-like, and has a thick bill with a prominent gonydeal angle. Juvenile Parasitics can have distinctive cinnamon tones to their plumage, usually have pale primary tips, and wavy uppertail covert bars which are diagnostic.

Long-tailed jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches

Sexes similar

Small jaeger with long tail extension behind narrow-based wings

Small bill with subtle gonydeal angle near midpoint of bill

Mainly pelagic but occasionally seen inland

Sometimes chases other birds to steal their food

Powerful, yet agile, flight

Juveniles take several years to reach adult plumage

Light and dark color morphs

Adult light morph:

Central tail feathers very elongated and pointed; longer than tail

Black cap covers eye and crosses chin

Yellow area below cap

White nape

Gray upperparts

White underparts and dark undertail coverts

Blackish outer wing and secondaries and gray inner wing; not as much white on primaries as other jaegers

Small, black bill

Adult dark morph:

Central tail feathers very elongated and pointed

Small, black bill

Entirely dark plumage except for base of primaries

Juvenile:

Rounded central tail feathers project pretty far beyond rest of tail

Head, body, and wing linings barred-belly may be pale

As birds age, gray of adult plumage becomes more apparent and tail feathers lengthen

Upperparts often with pale edgings

Primaries dark with white shaft streaks on outer 2 primaries

Often dark intrusion into white primary patch from below

Axillaries and uppertail coverts strongly barred black and white

Subadult:

Variable; gradually acquires adult plumage

Occurs in both dark and light color morphs
Best identified by tail feather shape, size, and bill shape

Similar species:

Young Long-tailed Jaegers look superficially like first-year Herring Gulls but have a more powerful, direct flight and white patches on the primaries visible from above and below the wing. Skuas are similar as well but are bulkier and thicker-necked, with much more prominent wing patches. Jaegers look most similar to each other. Adult Long-tailed can be safely identified when their very long, pointed central tail feathers are seen. The adult light morph Long-tailed lacks the breast band that Parasitic and Pomarines have, and has gray, not dark brown upperparts contrasting with dark secondaries. Juvenile and subadult jaegers are very difficult to tell apart. The Pomarine has a heavier bill and is larger than the other species and juveniles have very short rounded tail feathers. Juvenile Parasitics often have distinctive cinnamon tones to their plumage, pale primary tips or wavy uppertail coverts. Juvenile and subadult Long-tailed Jaegers often look grayer than the other species and can have longer tails. Juvenile Long-tailed Jaegers typically have black and white wavy uppertail covert bars and axillaries, long rounded central tail feathers, just two white primary shafts, and a dark intrusion into the white primary patch from below.

Laughing gull *Larus atricilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 41 inches
Medium-sized, long-winged gull
Long bill somewhat droopy towards tip
Head flat at forehead, giving mean look
Adult plumage reached in third year

Adult alternate:

Red bill
Black head
Thin white crescents above and below eye
White neck, breast, and belly
Dark gray back and upperwings
Pale scapular crescent and tertial crescent
Dark primaries, usually with no white tips
Dark primaries blend into gray of upperwings without white division
White tail

Adult basic:

Black bill
White head with faint black streaking on rear part of head
Dark primaries, usually with small white tips
White tail

Juvenile:

Black bill
Entirely warm brown head, neck, back, and upperwings
Pale edgings to upperwing coverts
Pale belly
Dark terminal band on white tail

Immature:

First-year bird has gray back, brown upperwing coverts, pale gray head with black streaks on rear head, grayish breast, and white tail with complete black terminal band
Second-year bird is essentially like adult basic, but often has a remnant of a tail band and does not have white tips to primaries

Similar species:

Bonaparte's, Little, Black-headed and Sabine's Gulls have much different wing patterns, shorter, thinner bills, and have numerous other distinctions (Bonaparte's and Little are much smaller). Franklin's Gull is extremely similar. Adults in alternate plumage have darker tips to primaries, less extensive dark on underside of primaries and a white bar between gray upperwing and black primaries. Immatures and basic-plumaged adults typically have half-hoods that are much darker than those of Laughing Gulls and include the eye. Other minor plumage differences exist, but all age groups are perhaps best separated by structural features. Franklin's Gulls are smaller, shorter-billed, rounder-headed, and have shorter wings.

Franklin's gull *Larus pipixcan*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches Wingspan: 35 inches
Medium-sized, fairly short-winged gull
Bill is relatively short and straight
Fairly round head gives gentle appearance
Adult plumage reached in second year

Adult alternate:

Red bill
Black head
Fairly bold white crescents above and below eye
White neck, breast, and belly
Dark gray back and upperwings
Pale scapular crescent and tertial crescent
Dark primaries, with bold white tips
Dark primaries divided from gray upperwing by white bar
White tail with pale gray central retrices

Adult basic:

Black bill
Prominent black half hood on rear of head

Juvenile:

Black bill
Black half hood (does not include forehead)
Gray back
Brown upperwings
Pale edgings to upperwing coverts
Pale foreneck, breast and belly
Dark terminal band on white tail does not include outer tail feathers

Immature:

First-year bird has gray back, brown upperwing coverts, black half hood, white breast and belly, and white tail with black terminal band that does not include outer tail feathers. Second-year bird like adult alternate, but may not show strong white division between mantle and wingtips. Birds with black hoods often show pale flecks around face.

Similar species:

Laughing Gull is extremely similar. Adults in alternate plumage have grayer heads, less prominent eye crescents, smaller white tips to primaries and lack the white bar between gray upperwing and black primaries. Immatures and basic-plumaged adults typically lack the half-hoods of Franklin's Gull. Other minor plumage differences exist, but all age groups are perhaps best separated by structural features. Franklin's Gulls are shorter-billed, smaller, and have shorter wings. Bonaparte's, Little, Black-headed and Sabine's Gulls have much different wing patterns

Little gull *Larus minutus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches
Small, tern-like gull
Short, thin, black bill
Short, rounded wings

Adult alternate:

Black head extending onto upper neck
White nape, neck, breast, belly, and tail
Pale gray back and upperwings
White trailing edge to primaries and secondaries
Dark gray underwings
Red legs

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate except lacks black hood and instead has black spot on ear coverts and smudgy gray cap

First year:

Head and body like adult basic
White tail with black terminal band
Pale gray upperwing marked by dark carpal bar and dark outer primaries
Pale trailing edge to wing
Pink legs
Second-year birds are similar to birds in adult basic plumage but have some dark visible in the primary tips and underwings are not as dark

Similar species:

Unlike other small gulls, adult Little Gulls have no black on the uppersurface of the wings and have wholly dark underwings. At rest, note that the black hood extends farther down the nape than the other species and the short wings make the bird appear stubby. First-year Little Gulls are easily distinguished from other small gulls by the pale trailing edge to the wing, but also have wider, bolder carpal bars. Adult Bonaparte's and Black-headed Gulls are superficially similar but have white wedges on the uppersurface of the wing and dark primary tips (visible in flight and at rest). Laughing and Franklin's Gulls both have much darker gray backs, never show similar wing patterns and have much thicker, more robust bills.

Black-headed gull *Larus ridibundus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches

Small, tern-like gull

Short, thin bill

Undersurfaces of primaries are black (except outermost is white)

Adult alternate:

Dark brown head

Dark red bill

Very narrow white crescents above and below eye

White nape, neck, breast, belly, and tail

Pale gray back and upperwings

Pale scapular crescent and tertial crescent

White wedge on top of outer primaries

Black tips to primaries creates black trailing edge to primaries and black wingtips at rest

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate except lacks dark hood and instead has black spot on ear coverts

First year:

Head and body like adult basic

Pale-based bill

White tail with black terminal band

Pale gray upperwing marked by dark carpal bar, dark trailing edge and slight white wedge in outer primaries

Second-year birds are essentially identical to birds in adult basic plumage

Similar species:

Bonaparte's Gulls are superficially similar but have dark bills in all plumages and pale undersurfaces to the primaries. First-year Bonaparte's have thinner carpal bars and trailing edges to the wing. Adult Little Gulls have no black on the upper surface of the wings, dark bills, and have wholly dark underwings. First-year Little Gulls are easily distinguished by the pale trailing edge to the wing and dark bill. Laughing and Franklin's Gulls both have much darker gray backs, never show similar wing patterns and have much thicker, more robust bills. First-year Ring-billed is somewhat similar to first-year Black-headed but lacks the dark ear spot and dark underwings.

Bonaparte's gull *Larus philadelphia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches Wingspan: 32 inches
Small, tern-like gull
Short, thin, black bill
Adult plumage reached in second year

Adult alternate:

Black head
Very narrow white crescents above and below eye
White neck, breast, belly, and tail
Pale gray back and upperwings
Pale scapular crescent and tertial crescent
White wedge on outer primaries
Black tips to primaries creates black trailing edge to primaries and black wingtips at rest
Pale underwing and underside of primaries

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate except lacks black hood and instead has black spot on ear coverts

Juvenile/First year:

Juvenile strongly washed with brown which fades rapidly with wear
Head and body like adult basic
White tail with black terminal band
Pale gray upperwing marked by dark carpal bar, dark trailing edge and slight white wedge in outer primaries

Similar species:

Adult Little Gulls have no black on the uppersurface of the wings and have wholly dark underwings. First-year Little Gulls are easily distinguished by the pale trailing edge to the wing, but also have wider, bolder carpal bars. Black-headed Gulls are superficially similar but have pale bills in all plumages and dark undersurfaces to the primaries. Laughing and Franklin's Gulls both have much darker gray backs, never show similar wing patterns and have much thicker, more robust bills

Heerman's gull *Larus heermanni*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches
Medium-sized gull
Fairly short, small bill with indistinct gonydeal angle

Adult alternate:

Bright red bill with dark tip
Black legs
Dark eye
White head
Dark gray back and upperwings
Gray underparts
White tertial crescent
Black primaries
White trailing edge to wings
Black tail with thin white terminal band

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but dark streaks about gray head

First-year:

Pale bill with black tip
Black legs
Black plumage
Wings dark brown

Second-year:

Like first-winter but plumage grayer

Similar species:

The very dark plumage of this gull make it unlikely to be confused with other gull species.

Mew gull *Larus canus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 42 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized gull

Fairly short, small bill with indistinct gonydeal angle

European birds occasionally stray to Atlantic Coast are somewhat similar to United States birds

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill

Dull yellow legs

Dark eye

White head, neck, breast, and belly

Medium gray back and upperwings

White tertial crescent

Black primaries with white tips and white line dividing black and gray

White tail

European birds differ in details of wingtip pattern

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but brown smudges about head

Juvenile:

Black bill quickly developing pale base

Dark brown plumage

First-year:

Pink bill with black tip

Pink or gray legs

White head, neck and upper breast streaked with brown

Belly brown

Medium gray back

Upperwing coverts dull brown

Medium gray secondaries

Black primaries

Dark tail (European birds have white tails with sharp black terminal bands)

Second-year:

Like adult basic but often with black-tipped yellow bill, mostly dark primaries and partial tail band

Similar species:

Adult Mew Gulls are similar to adult Ring-billed Gulls but have darker mantles, dark eyes, unmarked yellow bills, rounder heads, and have more white in the primaries. First-winter Mew Gulls have darker gray backs, rounder heads, and different tail patterns-US birds have all-dark tails while European birds have white tails and upper and undertail coverts. Ring-billed Gulls have tails similar to European birds but have markings on the upper and undertail coverts. The secondary covert pattern is distinctive for each species, with Ring-billed showing dark, arrowhead-shaped internal markings versus the crisp pale border to the dark covert feathers of the Mew. Herring Gulls are similar to Mew Gulls but are much larger, paler-backed, and have thicker bills with a more pronounced gonys. First-winter Herring Gulls are much browner. California Gulls are similar in mantle color and shape but are larger and bigger-billed. Immatures are browner overall and show less contrast between the upperwing coverts and the secondaries. Adult Black-legged Kittiwake has entirely dark primary tips without white spots.

Ring-billed gull *Larus delawarensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 49 inches
Medium-sized gull
Fairly short, small bill with indistinct gonydeal angle

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill with complete black ring at gonys
Bright yellow legs
Yellow eye
White head, neck, breast and belly
Pale gray back and upperwings
White tertial crescent
Black primaries with white tips and two white mirrors on outer primaries
White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but thin dark streaks about head and duller soft parts

Juvenile:

Black bill quickly developing pale base
Pale head, breast, back and belly with light brown scalloping
Dark upperwing coverts with wide white edgings
Pale belly
Dark outer primaries
Dark terminal band on white tail

First-year:

Pink bill with black tip
Pink or gray legs
White head, neck and upper breast streaked with brown
Pale gray back
Upperwing coverts dull brown
Pale gray secondaries
Black primaries
Dark terminal band on white tail

Second-year:

Like adult basic but often with black-tipped yellow bill, entirely dark primaries and partial tail band

Similar species:

Adult Herring Gulls are similar to Ring-billed Gulls but are much larger, have pinkish legs, and a much thicker yellow bill with more pronounced gonys. First-winter Herring Gulls are much browner, but second and third-winter birds can be confusing since soft part colors are variable and third-year Herring Gull often show a ring around the bill. Such birds are most easily distinguished by the larger size and larger bill of Herring Gull. California Gulls are more similar in size and shape but are still larger and bigger-billed. Adults are darker-backed than Ring-billed, with a brown eye, heavier head streaking, and a different bill pattern. Immatures are browner overall and show less contrast between the upperwing coverts and the secondaries. Adult Mew Gulls have unmarked bills, a darker gray back and are smaller. Juvenile Mew Gulls are much darker. First and second-winter Mew Gulls have a darker gray back and a daintier appearance. Common Black-headed and Bonaparte's Gulls are somewhat smaller in winter but have dark auriculars and very different wing markings in flight. Winter adult Black-legged Kittiwake has a plain yellow bill and entirely black wingtips.

California gull *Larus californicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches Wingspan: 52 inches

Medium-sized gull

Fairly large bill with distinct gonydeal angle

Fairly rounded forehead and smaller bill give more gentle appearance than Herring Gull

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill with complete black ring distal to red spot at gonys

Bright yellow legs

Brown eye

White head, neck, breast, and belly

Gray back and upperwings

White tertial crescent

Black primaries with white tips and two white mirrors on outer primaries

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but blurry brown streaking and spotting on head and nape

Juvenile/First-year:

Black bill quickly developing pale pink base

Wholly brown body plumage

Dark brown primaries

Dark brown secondaries and greater secondary coverts appears as double dark bar on trailing edge of wing in flight

Black legs quickly become pink

Dark outer primaries

Dark tail

Pale rump marked with dark bars and appears dark

Second-year:

Green-yellow bill with black tip

Pale head, neck, upper breast, and belly with brown streaking

Dull brown upperwing coverts

Dark brown primaries and tail

Gray back

White tail with dark terminal band

Third-year:

Like adult basic, but often lacks adult bill pattern, wing pattern, and often retains a partial tail band

Similar species:

Adult Herring Gulls are similar to California Gulls but are larger, have pinkish legs, a yellow iris, paler backs, and a slightly thicker yellow bill with a more pronounced gonys. First-winter Herring Gulls are extremely similar but usually have entirely black bills and only show contrasting secondaries in flight, and lack contrasting greater secondary coverts. Immature birds are probably best separated by the subtleties of size, shape and bill shape. Some subadult Herring Gulls can have both a red spot and black ring on the bill, as well as yellowish or gray legs, so identify such birds with caution. Adults are darker-backed than Ring-billed Gulls, with a brown eye, heavier head streaking, and a different bill pattern. Immatures are browner overall than immature Ring-billed Gulls and show less contrast between the upperwing coverts and the secondaries. The Lesser Black-backed Gull, increasingly common in the New World, is similar but is longer-winged. Adults are darker-backed, have yellow legs and a pale iris, and first-year birds are darker backed and have dark bills through their first summer at which point their darker back color begins to show. The upperwings of first winter birds also show almost no contrast in flight and at rest. Adult Mew Gulls are smaller with unmarked yellow bills.

Herring gull *Larus argentatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 20 inches Wingspan: 55 inches
Large gull
Fairly large bill with distinct gonydeal angle
Flat forehead and large bill give mean appearance

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill with red spot at gonys
Pink legs
Yellow iris
White head, neck, breast, and belly
Gray back and upperwings
White tertial crescent
Black primaries with white tips and two white mirrors on outer primaries
White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but blurry brown streaking and spotting on head and nape

Juvenile/First-year:

Black bill
Brown body plumage
Dark brown primaries and secondaries
Black legs quickly become pink
Dark barred rump
Dark tail

Second-year:

Pinkish bill with black tip
Pale brown head, neck, upper breast, and belly
Dull brown upperwing coverts
Dark brown primaries and tail
Gray back
White tail with black terminal band

Third-year:

Like adult basic, but often lacks adult bill pattern, wing pattern, and often retains a partial tail band

Similar species:

Adult Herring Gulls are similar to California Gulls but are larger, have pinkish legs, a yellow iris, paler backs, and a slightly thicker yellow bill with more pronounced gonys. First-winter Herring Gulls are extremely similar to young California Gulls but usually have entirely black bills and only show contrasting secondaries in flight, and lack contrasting greater secondary coverts. Immature birds can be distinguished by back color when it is acquired but are otherwise probably best separated by the subtleties of size, shape, and bill shape. Adult Herring Gulls are similar to adult Ring-billed Gulls but are much larger with larger bills and a more pronounced gonydeal angle. Ring-billed Gulls have yellow legs and a complete black ring on the bill. Immatures Herring Gulls are browner overall than immature Ring-billed Gulls and show less contrast between the upperwing coverts and the secondaries. Adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls are much darker-backed and have yellow legs, while first-year birds are very similar but have whiter rumps, darker wing coverts, entirely black bills through their first summer, and paler heads and underparts that are spotted with brown. Western Gull is quite similar in subadult plumages but has a white rump that contrasts with back in first-year plumages, a larger bill, and shows the distinctive dark back color by the second winter. Immature Glaucous-winged Gulls lack the contrast between the upperwing coverts and primaries shown by all Herring Gulls. Thayer' Gull differs from Herring Gull primarily by morphological features. Glaucous-winged x Western Gull hybrids are typically larger-billed than Herring Gulls, and show paler primaries as immatures and a single white mirror on primaries as adults

Thayer's gull *Larus thayeri*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches
Sexes similar
Large gull
Fairly large bill with indistinct gonydeal angle
Rounded head

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill with red spot at gonys
Pink legs
Dark eye
White head, neck, breast, and belly
Gray back and upperwings
White tertial crescent
Primaries tips blackish from above, gray tips from below
White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but blurry brown streaking and spotting on head and nape

Juvenile/First-year:

Black bill
Wholly brown body to pale brown plumage
Pale brown primaries
Pale brown secondaries
Black legs quickly become pink
Pale brown tail band

Second-year:

Pale bill with black tip
Pale brown head, neck, upper breast, and belly
Dull brown upperwing coverts
Brown primaries and tail
Gray back

White tail with dark terminal band

Third year:

Like adult basic, but often lacks adult bill pattern, wing pattern, and often retains a partial tail band

Similar species:

Thayer's Gulls are quite difficult to identify. Their plumage is between that of Herring Gull and Iceland Gull. They have the rounded head and slim bill of the Iceland Gull but the darker plumage of the Herring Gull. As adults, they can be told from both Iceland and Herring Gulls by their dark eyes. They have more extensive dark in the primaries than Iceland Gulls but less than Herring Gulls (especially when viewed from below). First-winter birds can be considerably paler than Herring Gulls without the darker outer primaries, and have rounded heads and thinner bills. Thayer's Gulls typically have brown secondaries and a brown tail band which are equal in color and duller than the body plumage. Iceland Gull rarely shares this, and on Herring Gull the tail band is always darker than the secondaries. Adult Thayer's Gulls are similar to California Gulls but are larger, have pinkish legs, and paler backs. First winter Thayer's Gulls are generally paler than young California Gulls and have entirely black bills. Immature birds can be distinguished by back color when it is acquired. Adult Thayer's Gulls are similar to adult Ring-billed Gulls but are much larger with larger bills. Ring-billed Gulls have yellow legs and a complete black ring on the bill. Immature Thayer's Gulls show less contrast between the upperwing coverts and the secondaries than immature Ring-billed Gulls. Adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls are much darker-backed and have yellow legs, while first-year birds are very similar but have whiter rumps, darker wing coverts, and underparts that are spotted with brown. Western Gull is quite similar in subadult plumages but has a white rump that contrasts with back in first-year plumages, a larger bill, and shows the distinctive dark back color by the second winter. Glaucous-winged Gull has a larger bill and primary tips the same color as the mantle. Glaucous-winged x Western Gull hybrids are typically larger-billed than Thayer's Gulls, and show paler primaries as immatures and a single white mirror on primaries as adults.

Iceland gull *Larus glaucoides*

Identification Tips:

Length: 19 inches
Fairly large gull
Bill relatively slim with indistinct gonydeal angle
Rounded head
Wingtips extend well beyond tail at rest

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill with red spot at gonys
Pink legs
Light eye
White head, neck, breast, and belly
Gray back and upperwings
White tertial crescent
Primary tips white with gray subterminal markings
White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but blurry brown streaking and spotting on head and nape

Juvenile/First-year:

Black bill
Ghostly white or pale plumage with pale brown edgings
White primaries
White secondaries
Black legs quickly become pink
White tail with gray to pale brown speckling

Second-year:

Pale bill with black tip
Pale head, neck, upper breast, and belly
Pale gray back

Third year:

Like adult basic but often lacks adult bill pattern

Similar species:

Glaucous Gulls are quite similar to Iceland Gulls but are larger, have larger bills, flatter heads, and, at rest, shorter wingtips that barely project beyond the end of the tail. First-winter Glaucous Gulls have pink-based, not black, bills. Herring Gulls have black wingtips as adults and much darker plumage as immatures. Thayer's Gulls are similar in size and shape but have darker wingtips and eyes as adults and darker, tail bands and flight feathers as immatures. Thayer's also has a slightly bigger bill and its wingtips do not appear as long at rest. Some individuals may not be separable in the field, as Thayer's Gull can be quite pale. Other gulls have darker mantles, wingtips, or tails.

Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches
Sexes similar
Large gull
Slim bill with indistinct gonydeal angle
Round head

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill with red spot at gonys
Yellow legs
Yellow iris
White head, neck, breast, and belly
Dark gray back and upperwings
White tertial crescent
Black primaries with white tips and one or two white mirrors on outer primaries
White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but blurry brown streaking and spotting on head and nape

Juvenile/First year:

Black bill
Wholly brown body plumage but may be paler on head
Back appears somewhat checkered
Dark brown primaries
Dark brown secondaries and secondary coverts
Pinkish legs
Dark outer primaries
Pale rump marked with dark bars and appears pale
Dark tail

Second year:

Variably pinkish bill with black tip
Pale brown head, neck, upper breast, and belly
Dull brown upperwing coverts
Dark brown primaries and tail
Dark gray back
White tail with black terminal band

Third year:

Like adult basic, but often lacks adult bill pattern, wing pattern, and often retains a partial tail band

Similar species:

From the second year through adult plumage, the Lesser Black-backed Gull has a very dark gray back. Great Black-backed Gull has wingtips the same color as the mantle, not darker as the Lesser, and pink legs. Western and Slaty-backed Gulls are larger and have pink legs. Yellow-footed Gull is larger with a darker back, larger bill, and a restricted range. First-year Lesser Black-backed Gulls are very similar to Herring Gulls but have whiter rumps, darker wing coverts, entirely black bills through their first summer, and paler heads and underparts that are spotted with brown. First-year Great Black-backed Gulls have whiter heads and are larger with much bigger bills, and have more strongly checkered wing coverts and secondaries.

Western gull *Larus occidentalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 21 inches Wingspan: 55 inches
Large gull
Fairly large bill with distinct gonydeal angle
Flat forehead and large bill give mean appearance

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill with red spot at gonys
Pink legs
Yellow iris
White head, neck, breast, and belly
Dark gray back and upperwings (paler in northern birds)
White tertial and scapular crescent
Black primaries with white tips and a single white mirror on outermost primary
White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but has faint brown streaking on head

Juvenile/First-year:

Black bill
Wholly brown body plumage
Dark brown primaries and secondaries
Black legs quickly become pink
Dark tail
Whitish rump contrasts with dark back

Second-year:

Pinkish bill with black tip
Pale head, neck, upper breast, and belly
Dull brown upperwing coverts
Dark brown primaries and tail
Dark gray back

Third-year:

Like adult basic, but often lacks adult bill pattern, wing pattern, and often retains a partial tail band

Similar species:

Adult Western Gulls are dark-backed enough to prevent confusion with Herring, Ring-billed, Glaucous-winged, Thayer's, and California gulls. The Yellow-footed Gull of southern California is nearly identical except that it has yellow rather than pink legs and is a three-year gull rather than a four-year gull and thus shows a different plumage progression. Otherwise the Western Gull does not overlap in range with Great or Lesser Black-backed Gulls, but might be separable from both by shape, leg color, and mantle color. Beware of intermediately-colored Glaucous-winged x Western Gull hybrids, which should show larger bills than typical Western Gulls.

Glaucous-winged gull *Larus glaucescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches

Large gull

Very large bill with distinct gonydeal angle

Flat forehead and large bill give mean appearance

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill with red spot at gonys

Pink legs

Dark eyes

White head, neck, breast and belly

Pale gray mantle

White tertial crescent

Pale gray primaries (do not contrast with back) have white tips

White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but blurry brown streaking and spotting on head and nape

Juvenile/First-year:

Black bill

Wholly pale brown body plumage

Pale brown primaries do not contrast with body plumage

Pale brown tail does not contrast with back

Black legs quickly become pink

Second-year:

Black bill with pink base

Pale brown head, neck, upper breast, belly, primaries and tail

Pale gray back

Third-year:

Like adult basic, but often lacks adult bill pattern, wing pattern, and often retains a partial tail band

Similar Species:

Adults of all other species have primaries that contrast with the back color. Glaucous-winged is one of the largest and meanest-looking gulls and can often be distinguished just by shape. Young birds also show no contrast between the body and primaries. First-winter plumage is very similar to Thayer' Gull, which has slightly darker primaries and secondaries and a smaller bill (with shallower gonydeal angle), rounder head and smaller size. Glaucous-winged and Western gulls hybridize extensively so beware of intermediate-plumaged hybrids.

Glaucous gull *Larus hyperboreus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 24 inches Wingspan: 60 inches
Sexes similar
Large gull
Bill large with distinct gonydeal angle
Squarish head
Wingtips extend slightly beyond tail at rest

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill with red spot at gonys
Pink legs
Light eye
White head, neck, breast, and belly
Gray back and upperwings
White tertial crescent
Primary tips white
White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but blurry brown streaking and spotting on head and nape

Juvenile/First-year:

Pinkish bill with distinct black tip
Ghostly white or pale with pale brown barring
White primaries and secondaries
White tail with gray to pale brown speckling

Second-year:

Pale bill with black tip
Pale head, neck, upper breast, wings, and belly
Pale gray back

Third year:

Like adult basic but often lacks adult bill pattern

Similar species:

Glaucous Gulls are quite similar to Iceland Gulls but are larger, have larger bills, flatter heads, and, at rest, shorter wingtips that barely project beyond the end of the tail. Adult Iceland Gulls have dark primary tips in the United States (Greenland and European birds can have white wingtips). First-winter Glaucous Gulls have pink-based, not black, bills. Other gulls lack the white primary tips of the Glaucous Gull.

Great black-backed gull *Larus marinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 24 inches Wingspan: 65 inches
Very large gull
Very large bill with distinct gonydeal angle
Flat forehead and large bill give mean appearance

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow bill with red spot at gonys
Pink legs
Yellow iris
White head, neck, breast and belly
Black mantle
White tertial and scapular crescent
Black primaries (do not contrast with back) with white tips and two white mirrors on outer primaries
White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but faint brown streaking on head

Juvenile/First-year:

Black bill
White head, neck, breast, and belly with very fine dark streaks
Back and upperwings strongly checkered with dark brown and white
Dark primaries
White tail with fine bars and black terminal band
White rump contrasts with back

Second-year:

Pinkish bill with black tip
Pale head, neck, upper breast, and belly, streaked finely with brown
Dull brown upperwing coverts
Black back
White tail with black terminal band

Third-year:

Like adult basic, but often lacks adult bill pattern, wingtip pattern, and often retains brown upperwing coverts and a partial tail band

Similar species:

Adults and subadults older than one year are recognizable by their black mantle. All other gulls (including Lesser Black-backed Gulls) are paler backed. First-year birds are similar to other gulls in their first winter, but have very pale heads and breasts and strongly checkered upperparts, unlike any other species. First-year Lesser Black-backed Gulls are perhaps most similar in that they have white rumps and pale heads and breasts, but are very differently proportioned being smaller-billed and much longer-winged, and even smaller in size than a Herring Gull.

Sabine's gull *Xema sabini*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches
Small gull
Shallowly forked tail

Adult alternate:

Black head
Black bill with yellow tip
White neck and underparts
Gray mantle
Bold wing pattern: black outer primaries bordered by white triangle on trailing edge of wing extending to wrist and gray inner wing
White tips to black primaries
Dark eye with red orbital ring
Black legs
White tail

Adult basic:

Similar to adult alternate but has white head with dark smudges

Juvenile/First-year:

Gray-brown rear of head, nape, mantle, and sides of breast
Thin white edges to mantle create scalloped look
White underparts
Wing pattern similar to adult but inner wing is brown
Black primaries lack white tips
Dark bill
Pinkish legs
Black terminal tail band

Similar species:

In flight, the bold wing pattern is diagnostic. At rest, adults can be told by their yellow-tipped bills. Immatures can be told from other small immature gulls by their scalloped, brownish, not gray, mantles and forked tails.

Black-legged kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13.5 inches Wingspan: 36 inches
Sexes similar
Medium-sized gull
Bill relatively slim with indistinct gonydeal angle
Black legs

Adult alternate:

Bright yellow unmarked bill
Dark eye
White head, neck, breast, and belly
Gray back and upperwings
Thin white tertial crescent
Primary tips black with no white spots
White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but dark smudges on nape

Juvenile/First-year:

Black bill
Black ear spot
Black collar
White head, tail, and underparts
Gray back
Black outer primaries and carpal bar contrasting with paler inner primaries and secondaries
Black terminal tail band

Similar species:

Only the Red-legged Kittiwake shares the solid black wingtips and plain yellow bill of the adult Black-legged Kittiwake. The adult Red-legged Kittiwake has a darker mantle, shorter bill, darker color underprimaries, and red legs. Immature Black-legged Kittiwakes have bold wing patterns that are similar to immature Bonaparte's, Black-headed, and Little gulls but have a distinctive black collar. Immature Red-legged Kittiwakes lack a black tail band and dark carpal bar.

Red-legged kittiwake *Rissa brevirostris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized gull

Short bill with indistinct gonydeal angle

Dark gray mantle

Breeds locally on islands off Alaska-very rarely observed elsewhere in western United States and Canada

Adult alternate:

Yellow unmarked bill

Dark eye

Red legs

White head, neck, breast, and belly

White tertial crescent

Primary tips black with no white spots

White tail

Adult basic:

Like adult alternate but dark smudges on nape

Juvenile/First-year:

Black bill

Black ear spot

Thin black collar

Gray back

Black outer primaries

White tail

Similar species:

Only the Black-legged Kittiwake shares the solid black wingtips and plain yellow bill of the adult Red-legged Kittiwake. The adult Red-legged Kittiwake has a darker mantle, shorter bill, darker underwings, and red legs. First-year Red-legged Kittiwake has bold wing patterns that are similar to the immatures of several other small gulls, but are distinguished by the solid white tail.

Ross's gull *Rhodostethia rosea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches
Small gull
Short black bill
Wedge-shaped tail
Large, dark eye

Adult alternate:

Pale pink head and underparts
Thin black ring around head
Pale gray mantle
Pale gray wings with white trailing edge
Red legs
White tail

Adult basic:

Lacks pinkish cast to plumage
Lacks black ring around head
Grayish smudges on rear of head

Juvenile/First-year:

Black ear spot
Gray back
Black outer primaries and carpal bar
Black terminal tail band
Dull pink legs

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the pinkish cast to the plumage and black ring around the head are diagnostic. In basic plumage, note the evenly gray wings on both the upper and under surfaces and the wedge-shaped tail. In first-winter plumage the wedge-shaped tail is diagnostic as is the small bill.

Ivory gull *Pagophila eburnea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 41 inches

Sexes similar

Fairly small gull

Black legs

Black bill with yellow tip

Large dark eye

Adult:

Entirely white plumage

Juvenile/First-year:

Mostly white plumage with dark smudging around face

Dark, terminal tail band

Black tips to flight feathers, coverts, and some scapulars

Similar species:

Iceland and Glaucous Gulls are similarly pale but are much larger and lack the black legs and yellow-tipped bill. First-year plumage is unmistakable.

Gull-billed tern *Sterna nilotica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 35 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized, robust tern

Thick, blunt, black bill

Short, notched tail

Pale underwings

Adult alternate:

Black legs

Black cap

White face, neck, breast, and belly

Pale gray back and upperwings

Adult basic:

Similar to adult alternate, but has a white forehead and dark streaking about the rear of the head, and variable dark ear spot

Juvenile:

Similar to adult basic but mantle has brownish spots

Similar species:

The Gull-billed Tern can be identified in all plumages by its thick, relatively short, black bill and shallowly forked tail.

Caspian tern *Sterna caspia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 20 inches Wingspan: 53 inches
Sexes similar
Dives into water for prey
Large, barrel-chested tern with long, thick, reddish bill
Short, notched tail
Hints of a crest at the rear of the head
Pale underwings with dark patch in primaries

Adult alternate:

Deep red bill, often with indistinct black ring at tip
Black legs
Black cap with very slight crested appearance
White face, neck, breast, and belly
Pale gray back and upperwings
Pale underwings with dusky gray on outer 5-6 primaries
White tail
Takes three years to reach full adult plumage

Adult basic:

Similar to adult alternate, but has a black cap streaked with white and darker, more worn, primaries

Juvenile:

Pale legs
Deep orange bill
Brownish cap streaked with white
Upperwing coverts and scapulars marked by crisp, black scalloping
White face, neck, breast, and belly
Pale upperwing has darker outer primaries and secondaries
Grayish tail

Immature:

First-year birds are like basic-plumaged adults but have darker uppersurfaces to the outer primaries, dark secondaries, a grayish tail, and a pale forehead
Second-year birds are almost identical to alternate-plumaged adults, but have often white spots in the cap, darker outer primaries and some gray in the tail

Similar species:

When trying to identify terns, it is safest to use a combination of field marks instead of relying on a single field mark. The Royal and Elegant terns are the only other large, orange-billed terns and are quite similar. Elegant Terns are very small compared to Caspians, are very slim-winged, have slimmer orange bills, have much more forked tails and less black on the undersurface of the primaries. The Caspian can be separated from the Royal by its thicker, reddish bill, dark wedge on the outer portion of the underwing, more shallowly-forked tail, broader wings and its tendency to have an almost complete cap in basic and immature plumages. The smaller Sterna terns have slimmer, black or black-tipped bills, slimmer bodies and wings and a much more deeply-forked tail.

Royal tern *Sterna maxima*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches Wingspan: 43 inches
Sexes similar
Dives into water for prey
Large tern with fairly thick orange bill
Fairly long, deeply forked tail
Spiky crest at the rear of the head
Pale underwing with dark tips to outer primaries
Takes three years to reach full adult plumage

Adult alternate:

Black legs
Black cap
White face, neck, breast, and belly
Pale gray back and upperwings
White rump and tail, often with dark edgings
Plumage held in Spring (March to May)

Adult basic:

White forehead and crown
Black mask extends rearward from eye to spiky crest at rear of head
White eye ring in dark mask
Outer primaries and tail feathers darken with wear, becoming dark gray in basic plumage

Juvenile:

Pale legs
White forehead and crown
Dark brown mask extending rearward from eye to spiky crest at rear of head
White neck, breast, and belly
Pale gray back
Dark brown carpal bar
Dark brown upper surface to secondaries and outer primaries
Gray tail with dark margins

Immature:

First-year birds generally have dark secondaries and outer primaries, and a slightly more extensive black mask
Second-year birds are generally very similar to adults in alternate plumage but often have

darker primaries and secondaries and white tips to feathers in black cap

Similar species:

When identifying terns, it is safest to use a combination of field marks instead of relying on a single characteristic. Elegant Terns are slightly smaller and slenderer, with more slender, drooping bills and, when not in alternate plumage, lack a pale eyering in the dark mask. The Caspian can be separated from the Royal by its thicker, reddish bill, dark wedge on the outer portion of the underwing, its more shallowly-forked tail and its tendency to have an almost complete cap in basic and immature plumages. The smaller Sterna terns have slimmer, black or black-tipped bills, slimmer bodies and wings and a much more deeply-forked tail.

Elegant tern *Sterna elegans*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches Wingspan: 43 inches
Sexes similar
Dives into water for prey
Large tern with long, thin, orange bill
Strongly curved culmen makes bill appear to droop at tip
Fairly long, deeply forked tail
Spiky crest at the rear of the head
Pale underwing with dark tips to outer primaries
Achieves full adult plumage by its second summer

Adult alternate:

Black legs
Black cap
White face, neck, breast, and belly
Pale gray back and upperwings
White rump and tail, often with dark edgings

Adult basic:

White forehead
Black mask extends rearward from eye to spiky crest at rear of head
Eye is surrounded by dark mask

Juvenile:

Legs black with variable amounts of yellow
White forehead
Dark brown mask extending rearward from eye to spiky crest at rear of head
White neck, breast, and belly
Pale gray back
Dark brown carpal bar
Dark brown upper surface to secondaries and outer primaries
Tail dark gray with darker tips and paler edges

Immature:

First-year: Similar to juvenile plumage but grayer upperparts
Second-year: Similar to adult basic but may retain a few juvenile flight and tail feathers

Similar species:

When identifying terns it is safest to rely on a combination of field marks rather than a single one. Elegant Terns are most similar to Royal Terns but are smaller and slenderer, with much more slender, drooping bills and lack a pale eyering in the dark mask in basic and immature plumages. The Caspian Tern can be separated from the Elegant by its thicker, reddish bill, dark wedge on the outer portion of the underwing, its more shallowly-forked tail and its tendency to have an almost complete cap in basic and immature plumages. The Cayenne Tern, a yellow-billed race of the Sandwich Tern has been recorded in the southeast United States, is very similar and differs mostly in extreme subtleties of bill structure. The smaller Sterna terns have slimmer, black or black-tipped bills, slimmer bodies and wings and a much more deeply-forked tail.

Sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 34 inches
Sexes similar
Dives into water for prey
Large tern with long, thin, black bill with yellow tip
Fairly long, deeply forked tail
Spiky crest at the rear of the head
Pale underwing with dark tips to outer primaries

Adult alternate:

Black legs
Black cap
White face, neck, breast, and belly
Pale gray back and upperwings
White rump and tail

Adult basic:

White forehead and streaked crown
Black mask extends rearward from eye to spiky crest at rear of head

Juvenile:

Similar to adult basic but has dark feather edgings to mantle
Yellow tip to bill may not be evident
Occasionally have yellowish bills

Similar species:

The smaller *Sterna* terns have shorter black or black-tipped bills (not yellow-tipped), slimmer bodies and wings and a more deeply-forked tail. Larger terns have red or orange bills.

Roseate tern *Sterna dougallii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 30 inches

Sexes similar

Dives into water for prey

Medium-sized tern with slender, pointed bill

Very long, deeply forked tail

Smoothly rounded head without crest

Pale underwing-somewhat dark tips to outermost primaries but inner primaries lack dark trailing edge

Pale gray mantle

May attain full adult plumage in three years

Local breeder in northeastern United States and Florida, winters outside United States and rarely observed during migration

Adult alternate:

Red legs

Mostly black bill during breeding season can become half pink or pinkish-red based by mid summer

Black cap

White underparts, sometimes with pinkish cast

White rump and tail

Tail extends beyond tip of primaries at rest

Molt to basic plumage begins in July

Adult basic:

Black bill

White forehead

Black around eye and across nape

Juvenile:

Shorter tail than adult

Crisp black scalloping on back

Black bill

Dark cap with white flecks

Dark legs

Immature:

Dark bill

White forehead
Dark patch around eye and across rear of head
Dark legs
Body plumage similar to adult
May not acquire full adult plumage until third year

Similar species:

When identifying terns it is safest to use a combination of field marks. The Roseate Tern breeds at scattered coastal locations in the eastern United States. It migrates over the ocean and is rarely encountered except at the breeding colonies. It is most similar to the Arctic, Common, and Forster's terns. During the breeding season, May and June, it can be told from the other species by its mostly black bill (red in Arctic, half orange/red in Forster's and Common), pinkish-white underparts (gray in Common and Arctic and white in Forster's), and paler gray upperparts. Later in the summer, the bill can become half pink or pinkish-red with a dark tip similar to the bills of Common and Forster's terns. At any time of year the wing pattern is a helpful field mark. The underwing pattern of the Roseate Tern lacks the dark trailing edge of the other species with only the outermost primaries having dark areas near the tips. The upperwing of the Roseate Tern lacks the dark wedge of the Common Tern. At rest, the tail of the Roseate projects farther beyond the wings than the Common Tern. The tail is all white in the Roseate Tern and lacks the black inner or outer webs of the other species. Juvenile Roseate Terns can be told from the other species by the dark forehead (white in the other species), black legs (orange to brown in the other species), and scaly black markings on the back (brown wash in Common and Forster's and fainter dark markings in Arctic). Immature Roseate Terns are trickier to identify but the long tail and wing pattern are helpful. The larger Sterna terns (Royal, Elegant, Caspian) have orange or red bills, much larger bodies, broader wings, shorter tails, black legs, and ragged crests at rear of head. The Sandwich Tern is larger and has a yellow tip to the bill.

Common tern *Sterna hirundo*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 31 inches

Sexes similar

Dives into water for prey

Medium-sized tern with slender, pointed bill

Long, deeply forked tail

Smoothly rounded head without crest

Pale underwing with broad, blurry, dark trailing edge

Gray upperwing with dark outer primaries (variable according to state of condition of plumage)

Window of translucent primaries shows through wings on inner primaries and outer secondaries

Alaskan birds can have all dark bills and brown legs

Can take three years to reach full adult plumage

Adult alternate:

Red legs

Orange-red bill with black tip

Black cap

White face

Medium gray foreneck, breast, and belly

Gray back and upperwings

Dark wedge in outer primaries

Primary pattern darkens with wear through season so that outer 5 primaries are entirely dark by late summer

White rump and tail, with dark edges to outer retricies

Tail extends only to tip of primaries at rest

Adult basic:

Red legs

Black bill

White forehead, face, foreneck, breast, and belly

Black cap extends up from eye to crown and rearward from eye to back of head

Outer primaries and tail feathers darken with wear, becoming dark gray in basic plumage

Dark carpal bar

Juvenile:

Pale flesh-colored legs

Pink to yellow-based bill turning to black with age

White forehead, foreneck, breast, and belly
Back color variable-often gray with pale brown and black feather edges
Dark carpal bar
Gray wings with brown tips to the upperwing coverts
Dark secondaries and lesser coverts contrast with paler inner wing
Short tail with dark tips

Immature:

First-year birds like adult basic
Second year birds like adult alternate, but often with white feathers in cap, paler breasts and faint carpal bars.

Similar species:

When identifying terns, it is safest to rely upon a combination of field marks. The Common Tern is most similar to the Roseate, Arctic, and Forster's Terns. The Forster's tern has a distinctive black eye patch except in the breeding season. The Common Tern has a black eye patch that continues across the nape. During the breeding season, the Forster's Tern has paler upper surfaces to the primaries that contrast with the rest of the wing while the Common Tern has a dark wedge in the primaries; its tail has white outer edges and dark inner edges, the opposite of the Common Tern; its underparts are white not gray like the Common Tern. The Arctic Tern is quite similar in all plumages but has a shorter, stubbier bill, shorter legs, and a longer tail. In the breeding season, it has darker gray underparts, an all red bill, more translucence in the primaries, crisp black trailing edge to the primaries, and lacks the dark wedge in the upper surface of the primaries. By late summer, Common Terns can have all red bills and the underparts turn whiter. At this time of year the most useful identification feature is that the Common Terns begin molting flight feathers before migrating to the wintering grounds while the Arctic Terns do not molt until arriving on the wintering grounds. Therefore, terns with missing flight feathers, and dark, worn outer primaries contrasting with fresh inner primaries will be Commons. Juvenile Common Terns have bicolored bills, brown-washed upperparts, and dark gray secondaries while juvenile Arctic Terns have black bills, grayer upperparts, and paler secondaries. Basic and immature plumaged birds are best separated by structural differences and wing patterns. The Roseate Tern can be told from the Common Tern by its longer all white tail, darker bill (except in late summer), paler underparts and upperparts, and lack of a dark trailing edge to the undersurface of the primaries. In juvenile plumage, Roseates have dark foreheads, dark legs, and scaly backs while the Common Terns have white foreheads, pale legs, and brown-washed backs. The larger Sterna terns (Royal, Elegant, Caspian) have entirely orange or red bills, much larger bodies, broader wings, shorter tails and black legs. In Alaska, Aleutian Tern has a white forehead.

Arctic tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches Wingspan: 31 inches

Sexes similar

Dives into water for prey

Medium-sized tern with short, slender, pointed bill

Short legs

Long, deeply forked tail

Smoothly rounded head without crest

Pale underwing with thin, well-defined, dark trailing edge

Gray upperwing

Translucent flight feathers

Breeds from Maine to Alaska but migrates mostly at sea, rarely seen from land

May attain full adult plumage in third year

Adult alternate:

Red legs

Red bill

Black cap

White cheek

Medium gray foreneck, breast, and belly-darker than Common Tern

Gray back and upperwings

White rump and tail, with dark edges to outer retricies

Tail extends just beyond tip of primaries at rest

Molts into basic plumage on wintering grounds

Adult basic:

Dark bill

White forehead with black mask continuing across nape

White underparts

Gray back and upperwings

Juvenile:

Pale red to brown legs

Black bill

White forehead, foreneck, breast, and belly

Dark patch around eye and across rear of head

Gray back with dark gray feather edges
Indistinct carpal bar
White secondaries

Immature:

Plumage similar to adult basic

Similar species:

When identifying terns, it is safest to rely upon a combination of field marks. The Arctic Tern is similar to the Common, Forster's, and Roseate terns. It can be told from the Common Tern when perched by its longer tail projecting beyond the wingtips, shorter legs, and shorter bill. In flight, the wing patterns are distinctive. The Arctic Tern has extensively translucent primaries while just the bases of the inner primaries are translucent in the Common. The trailing edge to the undersurface of the primaries is thin and crisp in the Arctic but thicker and blurrier in the Common. On the upper surface of the wing, the primaries are evenly colored in the Arctic Tern while there is a dark wedge in the Common Tern. Because Common Terns begin molting during migration, there is often a mixture of old, new and missing feathers in the wing. The Arctic Tern does not molt during migration and appears evenly colored in the wing. In the breeding season, May and June, the Arctic Tern has an all red bill and darker gray underparts than the Common Tern. Juvenile Arctic Terns have grayer upperparts, dark bills, and white secondaries. Immature plumages are best separated by the underwing pattern and structural features. At all times of year except the breeding season, the Forster's Tern has a distinctive black eyespot. In alternate plumage, it has a dark-tipped bill, white underparts, gray inner edges to the outer tail feathers, and whiter primaries. Roseate Tern in definitive alternate plumage has a black or mostly black bill, paler underparts and upperparts, and lacks dark trailing edge to the primary tips below. Juvenile Roseates have crisp black scalloping on back, dark legs, and dark foreheads. The larger Sterna terns (Royal, Elegant, Caspian) have longer, thicker bills, much larger bodies, broader wings, shorter tails, black legs, and ragged crests at rear of head.

Forster's tern *Sterna forsteri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 30 inches

Sexes similar

Dives into water for prey

Medium-sized tern with slender, pointed bill

Long, deeply forked tail

Smoothly rounded head without crest

Pale underwing with broad, blurry, dark trailing edge

Gray upperwing with pale primaries (and variably dark outermost primaries, dependent on plumage wear)

Little translucence in flight feathers when seen from below

May take three years to reach full adult plumage

Adult alternate:

Orange legs

Orange bill with black tip

Black cap

White face, foreneck, breast and belly

Pale gray rump and tail, with dark inner edges and white outer edges to longest tail feathers

Tail extends just beyond tip of primaries at rest

Plumage held in spring to early summer

Molt to basic plumage starts in July and is nearly complete by early fall

Adult basic:

Orange legs

Black bill

White head, face, foreneck, breast, and belly

Black patch surrounding eye

Freshly molted primaries typically very pale

Juvenile:

Pale orange legs

Black bill

White forehead, foreneck, breast, and belly

Black eye patch

Pale brown back

No carpal bar

Gray wings with brown tips to upperwing coverts

Immature:

Black bill and legs

First-year birds generally have dark secondaries and outer primaries, and a slightly more extensive black mask

Second-year birds are generally very similar to adults in alternate plumage but often have darker primaries and secondaries and white tips to feathers in black cap

Similar species:

When identifying terns, it is safest to rely on a combination of field marks. In most plumages the Forster's Tern has two field marks that separate it from the similar Common, Arctic, and Roseate terns: a black eye patch and white primaries that contrast with the gray upperparts. In alternate plumage, Common and Arctic terns have gray not white underparts while the Roseate Tern often has a darker bill. Common and Arctic terns have dark outer edges of the tail and white inner edges; just the opposite of the Forster's. The undersurface of the primaries is a useful feature for separating the Forster's Tern from Arctic and Roseate terns. The Forster's Tern has a broad, blurry trailing edge to the primaries where it is thin and crisp in the Arctic and very restricted in the Roseate. On the upper surface of the primaries, the Common Tern has a dark wedge that is lacking in the Forster's Tern. The larger Sterna terns (Royal, Elegant, Caspian) have entirely orange or red bills, much larger bodies, broader wings, shorter tails and ragged crests at rear of head.

Least tern *Sterna antillarum*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches Wingspan: 20 inches

Sexes similar

Flies with very rapid wingbeats

Dives into water for prey

Diminutive tern with slender, pointed bill

Very short legs

Short, forked tail

Smoothly rounded head without crest

Pale underwing with blurry primaries along leading edge

Adult alternate:

Yellow legs

Yellow bill with tiny black tip

Black cap with white forehead patch before eye

White face, foreneck, breast, and belly

Pale gray rump and tail

Entirely gray back and upperwing with dark outer two primaries

Adult basic:

Orange legs

Black bill

White forehead, face, foreneck, breast, and belly

Black cap mottled with white

Entirely gray back and upperwing with dark outer two primaries

Juvenile:

Pale orange legs

Pinkish bill becomes black with age

White forehead, foreneck, breast, and belly

Black eye patch

Pale crown streaked with brown and black

Pale brown back with brownish center to feathers

Dark carpal bar

Gray wings with brown tips to upperwing coverts

Dark outer five primaries forms bold, dark, wedge in flight

Short tail with dark gray-brown tips

First winter/First summer:

Black bill and legs

Black half hood

Pale forehead

Pale crown streaked with black

Dark carpal bar

Similar species:

No other North American tern approaches the Least Tern in size except the Black Tern. When flying the wingbeats often are so rapid that they cannot be counted. Most larger terns fly with wingbeats slow enough to be counted. Black Tern is closest in size but has a swallow-like flight, rarely dives for prey, is dark gray above and has a dark gray tail and is entirely black below in adult alternate plumage. The yellow bill and legs, and white forehead of the adult Least Tern are distinctive at rest.

Aleutian tern *Sterna aleutica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches
Sexes similar
Dives into water for prey
Medium-sized tern with short, slender, pointed bill
Long, deeply forked tail
Smoothly rounded head without crest
Mostly pale underwing with dark bar on secondaries
Gray mantle

Adult alternate:

Black legs
Black bill
Black cap with white forehead
Gray underparts
White rump and tail

Juvenile:

Scaly brownish wash to upperparts
Black bill with red lower mandible
Dark cap with pale forehead
Reddish legs
Tail with dark tips

Similar species:

The Aleutian Tern's United States range is restricted to Alaska. There, it might be confused with similarly-sized Arctic and Common Terns. The Aleutian Tern has a distinctive white forehead and a dark bar on the secondaries.

Bridled tern *Sterna anaethetus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches
Sexes similar
Medium-sized tern with long wings
Dark, slender, pointed bill
Long, dark, deeply forked tail
Smoothly rounded head without crest
Gray-brown upperparts
Black legs
Limited range in United States-mostly pelagic

Adult:

Black cap with thin white forehead patch
White collar
White underparts
White underwing coverts and dark flight feathers below
Pale bases to primaries on underwing

Juvenile:

Dark upperparts with pale edges to feathers
White underparts
White collar
Head pattern less distinct than adult
Paler wing linings and belly

Similar species:

The dark upperparts and white underparts of the adult Bridled Tern are also found in the Sooty Tern but note that the Bridled Tern has a black cap, white collar, and gray-brown upperparts while the Sooty Tern is uniformly dark from the cap to the upperparts. From below, the Sooty Tern has darker flight feathers than the Bridled Tern.

Sooty tern *Sterna fuscata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 34 inches
Sexes similar
Fairly large tern with dark, slender, pointed bill
Long, dark, deeply forked tail
Smoothly rounded head without crest
Black upperparts
Black legs
Limited range in United States-mostly pelagic

Adult:

Black cap with broad white forehead
White underparts
White underwing coverts and flight feathers below

Juvenile:

Dark brownish wash to plumage
Small pale spots on upperparts
Paler wing linings and belly

Similar species:

The very dark upperparts and white underparts of the adult Sooty Tern are also found in the Bridled Tern but note that the Bridled Tern has a white collar, paler upperparts, and paler undersurfaces to the flight feathers. The mostly dark plumage of the juvenile Sooty Tern is somewhat similar to alternate-plumaged Black Terns. Sooties are much larger and browner than Black Terns. Brown Noddies are similar to juvenile Sooty Terns but have pale caps, wedge-shaped tails and dark bellies.

Black tern *Chlidonias niger*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches Wingspan: 35 inches
Sexes similar
Slow swallow-like flight
Swoops down and picks prey off surface off water
Small tern with relatively short, black bill
Very short, dark legs
Short, notched tail
Smoothly rounded head without crest

Adult alternate:

Dark legs
Black head, neck, breast, and belly
White undertail coverts
Dark gray back; and upperwings with no apparent contrast
Gray rump and tail
Pale underwing coverts

Adult basic:

White face, foreneck, breast, and belly
Irregular black cap connected to dark ear spot
Entirely gray back and upperwing (paler than in alternate plumage)
Dark gray shoulder bar

Juvenile:

White face, foreneck, breast, and belly
Irregular black cap connected to dark ear spot
Brownish back and upperwing
Dark gray shoulder bar

First winter/first summer:

Like adult basic but often with blackish mottling in first summer

Similar species:

Small tern, significantly larger than Least but smaller than Common. Swallow-like flight and feeding habits distinctive. Easily separable from all other regular species by black breast and belly and dark gray upperwings in alternate plumage. More similar in basic and

immature plumages but size, irregular dark cap, short bill, and evenly gray upperwing distinctive. The White-winged Tern, accidental in United States, is similar but has whitish upperwings, white rump and tail and black axillaries in alternate plumage. In basic and immature plumages it is very difficult to separate but has black ear spot more separated from crown, whiter rump and tail, shorter bill and lacks shoulder bar.

Brown noddy *Anous stolidus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches

Sexes similar

Fairly large tern with dark, slender, pointed bill

Long, dark, wedge-shaped tail

Very dark brown plumage

Black legs

Limited range in United States-mostly pelagic

Adult:

White cap

Juvenile:

Dark cap

Similar species:

The juvenile Sooty Tern is similarly dark but has a pale belly, a forked tail, and lacks the pale cap. The Black Noddy is very similar but is smaller, has a more slender bill, a more prominent white cap, and is blacker.

Black noddy *Anous minutus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized tern with dark, slender, pointed bill

Long, dark, wedge-shaped tail

Blackish plumage

Black legs

Limited range in United States, sometimes seen in Dry Tortugas off Florida

Adult:

White cap

Juvenile:

Juvenile has darker cap

Similar species:

The juvenile Sooty Tern is similarly dark but has a pale belly, a forked tail, and lacks the pale cap. The Brown Noddy is very similar but is larger, has a thicker bill, a more diffuse white cap, and is browner.

Black Skimmer *Rhynchops niger*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches

Sexes similar

Skims surface of water with bill searching for prey

Large bill with orange base and black tip; lower mandible longer than upper

Short white tail with black center

Very dark upperparts

White forehead and underparts

Dark upperwing with white trailing edge

Pale underwings

Red legs

Duller above in winter

Immatures are mottled above

Similar species:

None

Dovekie *Alle alle*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.75 inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic-plumaged adult

Very small alcid that dives for food from water surface

Short, dark bill

White edges to scapulars

Thin, white trailing edge to secondaries

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Adult alternate

Blackish head, neck, back, wings, and tail

White breast, belly, and undertail coverts

Adult basic

White throat and upper breast

Whitish crescent on side of neck

Dark face

Similar species:

The very small size and short bill make this alcid easy to distinguish from other alcids inhabiting the Atlantic Ocean.

Common murre *Uria aalge*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic-plumaged adult but often with smaller bill

Large alcid that dives for food from water surface

Thin, pointed bill

Small, rounded tail

Blurry streaks make flanks appear dusky

Thin white trailing edge to secondaries visible at rest

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Adult alternate

Blackish head, neck, back, wings, and tail

White breast, belly, and undertail coverts

Some Atlantic birds have white eyering and line extending to the rear of face

White breast meets dark neck as blunt, rounded intrusion

Adult basic

White foreneck

Dark line extending from eye across cheek

Similar species:

The Thick-billed Murre is very similar to the Common Murre. In breeding plumage the Thick-billed Murre is blacker above with a white point intruding into the black throat. In winter, the Thick-billed Murre has a darker face without the dark line on the cheek. At close range in all plumages, it has a thin, white line on the bill that the Common Murre lacks and an overall heavier bill. Razorbills have heavier bills, whiter flanks, and pointed tails. Guillemots also have thin bills but are all black with white wing patches in summer and are much paler in winter with white wing patches

Thick-billed murre *Uria lomvia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic adult

Large alcid that dives for food from water surface

Dark, pointed bill with white line on upper mandible

Small, rounded tail

Blurry streaks make flanks appear dusky

Thin white trailing edge to secondaries visible at rest

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Adult alternate

Blackish head, neck, back, wings, and tail

White breast, belly, and undertail coverts

White on breast extends into dark neck as a sharp point

Adult basic

White foreneck

Dark face

Similar species:

The Thick-billed Murre is very similar to the Common Murre. In breeding plumage the Thick-billed Murre is blacker above with a white point intruding into the black throat. In winter, the Thick-billed Murre has a darker face without the dark line on the cheek. At close range in all plumages, it has a thin, white line on the bill that the Common Murre lacks and an overall heavier bill. Razorbills have heavier bills, whiter flanks, and pointed tails. Guillemots are somewhat similar but are all black with white wing patches in summer and are much paler in winter with white wing patches.

Razorbill *Alca torda*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic-plumaged adult but bill thinner

Large alcid that dives for food from water surface

Heavy, dark bill traversed by white lines

Pointed tail

Thin white trailing edge to secondaries visible at rest

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Adult alternate

Black head, neck, back, wings, and tail

White breast, belly, and undertail coverts

Adult basic

White chin and throat

Less crisp division between upperparts and underparts

Similar species:

Murres are perhaps most similar to Razorbills but have thinner bills, rounded tails, and dusky flanks. Basic-plumaged Atlantic Puffins also have large bills but have an obvious face pattern.

Black guillemot *Cepphus grylle*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10.5 inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic adult but has mottled wing patch

Medium sized alcid that dives for food from water surface

Thin, dark bill

Large white patch in wing visible at rest and in flight

White wing linings

Red legs and feet

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Adult alternate

Entirely black plumage

Adult basic

White head, neck, and underparts

Gray, mottle back

Black wings and tail

Similar species:

The Pigeon Guillemot is most similar in plumage to the Black Guillemot but their ranges only overlap in Alaska. In all plumages, the Pigeon Guillemot has dark wing linings and a dark wedge intruding into the white wing patch. In breeding plumage the male White-winged Scoter is vaguely similar but has a differently shaped bill and profile, white secondaries rather than coverts, and some white on the face. Murres and razorbill lack the white wing patches.

Pigeon guillemot *Cepphus columba*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10.5 inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic adult but has mottled wing patch

Medium size alcid that dives for food from water surface

Thin, dark bill

Large white patch in wing visible at rest and in flight

Small, dark wedge in white wing patch

Dark wing linings

Red legs and feet

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Adult alternate

Entirely black plumage

Adult basic

White neck and underparts

Dark areas on face

Gray, mottled back

Black wings and tail

Similar species:

The Pigeon Guillemot is most similar in plumage to the Black Guillemot but their ranges only overlap in Alaska. In all plumages, the Pigeon Guillemot has dark wing linings and a dark wedge intruding into the white wing patch. In breeding plumage the male White-winged Scoter is vaguely similar but has a differently shaped bill and profile, white secondaries rather than coverts, and some white on the face. Basic and juvenile plumage Marbled Murrelets are somewhat similar but lack the wing patches, have shorter necks, and smaller bills.

Marbled murrelet *Brachyramphus marmoratus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches
Sexes similar
Immature like basic adult but has mottled underparts
Small alcid that dives for food from water surface
Thin, short, dark bill
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Adult alternate

Extensively mottled with brown and white
Dark wing linings and tail

Adult basic

Dark cap extending below the eye
White throat, nape, and underparts
Dark patch on side of breast
Dark back, wings, and tail
White scapulars

Similar species:

In breeding plumage, the brown and white plumage of the Marbled Murrelet is similar only to the Kittlitz's Murrelet. However, the Kittlitz's has a white belly and white outer tail feathers. In winter, the white scapulars dividing the dark back and wings are diagnostic and can only also be found in the Kittlitz's murrelet. However, it has a dark cap that does not include the eye and a more complete breast band. Juvenile Marbled Murrelets might be confused with juvenile Pigeon Guillemots but are smaller, have shorter necks, bills, and no white in the wing. An Asian species, the Long-billed Murrelet, formerly a subspecies, is a casual stray to the United States (especially inland) and differs in its larger bill and face pattern.

Kittlitz's murrelet *Brachyramphus brevirostris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic-plumaged adult but has mottled underparts

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Small alcid that dives for food from water surface

Thin, short, dark bill

United States range largely confined to coastal Alaska

Adult alternate

Extensively mottled with brown and white

White belly

White outer tail feathers

Adult basic

Dark cap does not include the eye

White throat, nape, and underparts

Dark back, wings, and tail

Indistinct breastband

White scapulars

Similar species:

In breeding plumage, the brown and white plumage of the Kittlitz's Murrelet is similar only to the Marbled Murrelet but the Kittlitz's has a white belly and white outer tail feathers. In winter, the white scapulars dividing the dark back and wings are only shared by the Marbled Murrelet. However, it has a dark cap that extends below the eye and a less complete breast band. The white outer tail feathers of Kittlitz's Murrelet are diagnostic in all plumages. Juvenile Kittlitz's Murrelets might be confused with juvenile Pigeon Guillemots but have shorter necks, bills, and no white in the wing.

Xantus's murrelet *Synthliboramphus hypoleucus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Sexes similar

Small to medium size alcid that dives for food from water surface

Thin, short, dark bill

White chin, throat, breast, belly, and undertail coverts

Very dark lores, crown, nape, back, wings, and tail

White wing linings

Incomplete white eye ring

One form has more white around the eye

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

United States range mostly confined to coastal southern California

Similar species:

Among similarly-sized alcids, only the Xantus's and Craveri's murrelets have bold black upperparts contrasting with white underparts. Craveri's can be told from Xantus's by its dark wing linings, black extending onto the sides of the breast, black chin, and longer, thinner bill.

Craveri's murrelet *Synthliboramphus craveri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Sexes similar

Small to medium size alcid that dives for food from water surface

Thin, short, dark bill

White throat, breast, belly, and undertail coverts

Very dark lores, chin, crown, nape, back, wings, and tail

Dark shoulder extends onto side of breast

Dark wing linings

Incomplete white eye ring

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

United States range largely confined to coastal southern California

Similar species:

Among similarly-sized alcids, only the Xantus' and Craveri's Murrelets have bold black upperparts contrasting with white underparts. Craveri's can be told from Xantus' by its dark wing linings, black extending onto the sides of the breast, black chin, and longer, thinner bill.

Ancient murrelet *Synthlibormaphus antiquus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Sexes similar

Immature like basic adult but has whiter chin and throat

Small alcid that dives for food from water surface

Short, yellow bill

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Adult alternate

Black chin, throat, face, crown, and nape

White side of neck, breast, belly, and undertail coverts

Gray back and wings

White streaked line behind eye to nape

White wing linings

Adult basic

Black on throat less extensive and with some white feather edging

White line behind eye mostly obscure

White streaking on nape largely absent

Similar species:

In all plumages, the pale bill, black chin, and the contrast between the black nape and gray back are each distinctive marks.

Cassin's auklet *Ptychoramphus aleuticus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Sexes similar

Juvenile is similar to adult, but paler with a white throat

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Small alcid that dives for food from water surface

Short, dark bill with obscure yellow base

Dark gray upperparts

Gray chin, throat, breast, and flanks

White belly and undertail coverts

Broken white eyering

Similar species:

The mostly gray neck and breast distinguish the Cassin's Auklet from similarly- sized murrelets. Tufted Puffin and Rhinoceros Auklet are also mostly gray but are easily distinguished by their larger bills and bigger size.

Parakeet auklet *Aethia psittacula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25 inches

Sexes similar

Small alcid that dives for food from water surface

Thick, short, upturned, bright red bill

Yellow eye

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

United States range mostly confined to Alaska, stray elsewhere

Adult alternate

White plume behind eye

Blackish head, neck, and upperparts

White belly, and undertail coverts

Adult basic

Blackish head, nape, and upperparts

White throat, breast, belly, and undertail coverts

Bill darker

Similar species:

The Parakeet Auklet's bright red bill distinguishes it from all alcids except Crested and Whiskered Auklets. These species have dark bellies, crests, and different bill shapes. In winter, the short, thick bill (sometimes bright red) is a useful field mark. Crested, Whiskered, and Rhinoceros Auklets have somewhat similar bill shapes but all have dark, not white, throats and breasts.

Least auklet *Aethia pusilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches
Sexes similar
Immature similar to adult basic
Small alcid that dives for food from water surface
Thick, short bill
Bill dark red with paler tip
Yellow eye
Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed
Inhabits islands and surrounding waters of Alaska

Adult alternate

White line behind eye
White streaking on forehead
Blackish upperparts
White throat
Underparts variably mottled black and white
Scapulars tipped with white

Adult basic

Underparts whiter than in alternate plumage
Face pattern more obscure than in alternate plumage

Similar species:

The tiny size, white underparts, and short, dark, stubby bill of the Least Auklet are diagnostic.

Whiskered auklet *Aethia pygmaea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches

Sexes similar

Immature similar to adult basic but lacks crest and bill is dark

Small alcid that dives for food from water surface

Thick, short bill

Yellow eye

Entirely blackish plumage

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Inhabits islands and surrounding waters of Alaska

Adult alternate

Black crest sprouts from forehead

Three white plumes on face

Bill red with paler tip

Adult basic

Smaller crest

Smaller white plumes on face

Bill appears smaller and darker

Similar species:

Only Whiskered and Crested Auklets have a crest over the bill. In alternate plumage, the Whiskered Auklet has three white plumes on the head while the Crested only has one and has a quite smaller bill. In immature plumages where the crest is lacking, the larger size of the Crested Auklet may be the best field mark while in winter bill size and face pattern are also useful. In immature birds, the all dark plumage and smaller bill distinguish it from Tufted Puffins, Rhinoceros Auklets, and Parakeet Auklets.

Crested auklet *Aethia cristatella*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Sexes similar

Immature similar to adult basic but lacks crest and bill is dark

Small alcid that dives for food from water surface

Thick, short, orange bill

Yellow eye

Entirely blackish plumage

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Inhabits islands and surrounding waters of Alaska

Adult alternate

Black crest on top of bill

White plume behind eye

Bright orange bill

Adult basic

Smaller crest

Bill appears smaller and darker

Similar species:

The Crested Auklet is aptly named for its distinctive crest. Only the Whiskered Auklet shares this feature. In alternate plumage, the Whiskered Auklet has three white plumes on the head and a quite different bill shape. In immature plumages where the crest is lacking, the larger size of the Crested Auklet may be the best distinguishing mark. In immature birds, the all dark plumage and smaller bill distinguish it from Tufted Puffins, Rhinoceros Auklets, and Parakeet Auklets

Rhinoceros auklet *Cerorhinca monocerata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11.5 inches

Sexes similar

Immature similar to adult basic but lacks plumes and bill and eyes are darker

Medium to large alcid that dives for food from water surface

Thick, pointed, yellow bill

Gray plumage, darker on back

Belly and undertail coverts mottled white and gray

Yellow eye

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Adult alternate

Two white plumes on face: one behind the eye and the other behind the bill

Hornlike projection at base of upper mandible

Adult basic

White face plumes less distinctive

Horn absent

Similar species:

Bill shape should render it easily identifiable in all plumages. In basic plumage, the mostly dark plumage is shared by the smaller Cassin's Auklet, whiter-bellied Parakeet Auklet, and larger-billed Tufted Puffin. In alternate plumage, the head plumes and horn are diagnostic.

Atlantic puffin *Fratercula arctica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

Sexes similar

Immature similar to adult basic but bill is smaller and darker

Medium sized alcid that dives for food from water surface

Very large bill

Black crown, nape, throat, and upperparts

White breast, belly, and undertail coverts

Red legs and feet

Breeds on rocky islands and coasts in northeastern United States and eastern Canada

Pelagic in winter south to mid-Atlantic states

Adult alternate

Extremely colorful bill

White, triangular face patch

Adult basic

Bill somewhat duller

Gray, triangular face patch

Similar species:

The Atlantic Puffin is the only puffin within its range. Its huge, colorful bill is diagnostic. Immatures can look vaguely similar to Razorbills but have a grayish face and lack the white secondary bar. Murres are slimmer-billed.

Horned puffin *Fratercula corniculata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11.5 inches

Sexes similar

Immature similar to adult basic but bill is smaller and darker

Medium to large alcid that dives for food from water surface

Very large bill

Black crown, nape, throat, and upperparts

White breast, belly and undertail coverts

Red legs and feet

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Inhabits open ocean habitats and coasts from Alaska south (rarely) to California

Adult alternate

Extremely colorful bill-yellow at base and red at tip

White, triangular face patch

Hornlike projection from top of eye

Thin, dark line from eye to nape

Adult basic

Duller bill lacks yellow plate at base

Gray, triangular face patch

Similar species:

The Horned Puffin is most similar to the Tufted Puffin. In alternate plumage, the Horned Puffin lacks yellow tufts on the face and has white, not black, underparts. In winter, the gray face and white underparts of the Horned Puffin can separate them. Atlantic Puffin does not overlap in range and has a different bill pattern.

Tufted puffin *Fratercula cirrhata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12.5 inches

Sexes similar

Immature similar to adult basic but bill is smaller and darker

Pelagic bird only coming ashore to breed

Medium to large alcid that dives for food from water surface

Very large bill

Entirely dark plumage

Breeds from coastal Alaska to California, pelagic in winter

Adult alternate

Extremely colorful bill-yellow at base and red at tip

White, triangular face patch

Yellow tufts extending from behind the eye

Adult basic

Duller bill lacks yellow plate at base

Dark face

Lacks obvious tufts

Similar species:

The large bill separates adults from all other alcids except other puffins, both of which have white underparts. Juvenile Tufted Puffins are similar to Rhinoceros Auklets, but are rounder-headed with a slightly different bill shape.

Rock dove *Columba livia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

The familiar pigeon of cities and parks

Sexes similar

Adult similar to juvenile

Large, chunky dove

Medium length tail is squared off at tip

Highly variable plumage (some can be entirely chestnut, white, black or anything in between)

Typical color morph:

Dark bill

Dark gray head, neck and upper breast

Green and purple iridescence on hindneck

Pale gray back, wings and belly

Two dark bars on wings (formed from dark tips to secondaries and greater secondary coverts)

Dark gray primaries

White rump

Pale gray tail with black terminal band

Similar species:

Other pigeons are wholly dark with different head patterns. All other species lack double dark bar on wing and have darker wings and backs.

White-crowned pigeon *Columba leucocephala*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

Sexes similar

Large pigeon

Dark plumage

White crown

Range restricted to south Florida

Similar species:

Darker than Rock Dove and has white crown.

Red-billed pigeon *Columba flavirostris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11.5 inches

Sexes similar

Large pigeon

Dark plumage

Red bill

Range restricted to south Texas

Similar species:

Darker than other pigeons.

Band-tailed pigeon *Columba fasciata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13.5 inches

Sexes similar

Adult similar to juvenile

Large, chunky dove

Medium length tail is squared off at tip

Yellow bill with black tip

Purplish head foreneck and breast

Scaly green iridescent nape marked above by a white band

Dark gray back and primaries

Pale gray secondary coverts and rump

Dark gray tail with wide pale gray terminal band

Pale belly

Similar species:

The Rock Dove is superficially similar but never has a purplish head and neck with a scaly, green hindneck and white bar. The Band-tailed Pigeon also has a distinctive black-tipped yellow bill and has a terminal band paler than the rest of the tail.

Ringed turtle dove *Streptopelia risoria*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Pale creamy-buff head and underparts

Thin black collar

Grayish upperparts

Long, squared tail-underside has black base and white tip, uppersurface is gray with white outer tips

Sexes similar

Escaped cage bird with small populations in several cities

Similar species:

Eurasian Collared-Dove similar but has different song, darker primaries, grayer plumage, larger size, longer tail and more conspicuous white on the neck. Mourning Dove darker with pointed tail and lacks collar.

Eurasian collared-dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Pale gray head and underparts

Thin black collar with white upper border

Gray upperparts

Dark primaries

Long, squared tail-undersurface with black base and white tip, uppersurface gray with white outer tips

Sexes similar

Established in southern Florida and expanding northward

Similar species:

Ringed Turtle Dove similar and is best separated by its different song. Eurasian Collared Dove has darker primaries, more obvious white in the neck, is larger with a longer tail and has a grayer plumage. Mourning Dove darker with pointed tail and lacks collar.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

Gray head

Black nape with white spots

Brown upperparts

Pinkish-brown underparts

Long, pointed tail

Sexes similar

Range restricted to southern California

Similar species:

Mourning Dove lacks the spotted nape.

White-winged dove *Zenaida asiatica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Sexes similar

Adult similar to juvenile

Large, chunky dove

Fairly long, black bill

Pale blue, teardrop-shaped orbital ring to eye

Pale gray-brown head, neck, back, belly, and upperwings, with darker brown primaries

Long dark mark on lower face below eye

Purplish iridescence on neck

Bold white wing patch, visible at rest, formed by pale secondary coverts

Long tail is slightly rounded at tip

Dark brown tail with white corners bordered above by black line

Similar species:

The Rock Dove is superficially similar but lacks white wing patches, tail pattern, and blue orbital ring of White-winged Dove. Mourning Dove is similar in coloration but also lacks white wing patches, blue orbital ring and has a longer, more pointed tail.

Mourning dove *Zenaida macroura*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10.5 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized, somewhat slender dove with very thin neck

Black bill

Adult:

Pale buff-brown head, neck, breast, and belly

Purple and green iridescence on neck

Small black mark on lower neck

Medium brown back and upperwings, with large black spots on coverts

Long tail is pointed at tip

Dark brown tail with white tips to outer four tail feathers

Juvenile:

Dark brown mottled head neck and breast

Scaly neck and upperwings with numerous black spots on coverts and scapulars

Pale belly

Medium length tail is pointed at tip

Similar species:

Long pointed tail is distinctive for adults, while black spotting on coverts and pale color help distinguish it from White-winged and White-tipped Doves. Juvenile is easily confused with Common Ground-Dove and Inca Dove, but is longer necked, shows a pointed tail with more white at edges and lacks cinnamon in primaries.

Inca dove *Columbina inca*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches

Sexes similar

Adult similar to juvenile

Small, slender dove

Black bill

Blue orbital ring

Pale gray-brown body is darker on back and upperwings and is extensively scaly (including back and belly)

Cinnamon inner webs of primaries visible in flight, and occasionally at rest

Long tail slightly rounded at tip

Tail is brown centrally, with black edges and white outermost tail feathers

Similar species:

Juvenile Mourning Doves are also long-tailed and scaly, but have dark spots on coverts, are never so extensively scaly and lack blue orbital ring and cinnamon primaries.

Common Ground-Dove is similar but shorter-tailed, has dark spots on coverts and is only scaly about head and breast, never on back and belly.

Common ground dove *Columbina passerina*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches
Small, chunky dove
Black-tipped orange bill
Gray-brown back and upperwings
Breast and head scaly
Black spotting on wing coverts
Cinnamon inner webs of primaries visible in flight, and occasionally at rest
Cinnamon wing linings
Short tail is slightly rounded at tip
Tail is brown centrally, with black edges and white corners
Juvenile similar to adult female

Adult male:

Pinkish-buff head, neck and breast
Pinkish unscaled belly
Blue hindneck and nape

Adult female:

Pale gray head, neck, nape, and breast
Gray unscaled belly

Similar species:

Juvenile Mourning Doves are also scaly, but are longer-tailed, lack cinnamon primaries and tend to be more extensively scaly. Inca Dove is longer-tailed, scaly on the belly and back and lacks spotting on coverts. Rare Ruddy Ground-Dove lacks scaliness and has black underwing coverts.

Ruddy ground-dove *Colmbina talpacoti*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Small dove

Grayish head

Brownish-pink underparts

Rusty upperparts with black spots on wings -female grayer

Rusty patches in primaries visible in flight

Blackish patch in wing linings

Short tail with black outer tail feathers

Sexes similar

Rare but regular stray to southwestern United States

Similar species:

Common Ground-Dove and Inca Dove similar but have scaly upperparts. Male Ruddy Ground-Dove has distinctive rusty upperparts.

White-tipped dove *Leptotila verreauxi*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Pale head and underparts

Darker upperparts

Long, squared tail with white outer tips

Sexes similar

United States range restricted to southern Texas

Similar species:

Mourning Dove thinner with pointed tail.

White-winged Parakeet *Brotogeris versicolurus*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Hooked bill

White patches in wing

Green head and body

Sexes similar

Introduced to Florida and California

Formerly conspecific with Yellow-chevroned Parakeet and called Canary-winged Parakeet

Similar species:

The hooked bill and green plumage are similar to a number of other introduced and escaped parrots and parakeets but the large white wing patches, most evident in flight, identify it.

Black-billed cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches
Sexes similar
Slender, long-tailed bird
Black bill

Adult:

Red orbital ring
Cold brown head, nape, back, upperwings, and uppertail
White chin, foreneck, breast and belly
Tail is gray below with very narrow white tips to tail feathers

Juvenile:

Yellow orbital ring
Brown head, nape, back, upperwings and uppertail, with pale tips to wing coverts
White chin, foreneck, breast and belly suffused with pale buff
Tail is gray below with very narrow buff tips to tail feathers

Similar species:

Adult Yellow-billed Cuckoo has yellow-based bill and cinnamon primaries in all plumages, and larger white tail spots below. Juvenile Yellow-billed Cuckoos can be black-billed and can have small tail spots and are best identified by primary pattern. Mangrove Cuckoo has yellow-based bill, black mask, buff breast and larger white tail spots below.

Yellow-billed cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

Sexes similar

Slender, long-tailed bird

Yellow orbital ring

Cinnamon inner webs to primaries, often visible at rest

Brown head, nape, back, and upperwings

White chin, breast, and belly

Brown uppertail has black outer tail feathers with white tips

Adult:

Black bill with yellow basal half of lower mandible

Tail feathers with extensive pale tips below

Juvenile:

Tail feathers have significantly smaller pale tips below

Occasionally with entirely black bill

Similar species:

Adult Black-billed Cuckoo has red orbital ring, black bill, smaller tail spots, and lacks cinnamon primaries. Juvenile Black-billed Cuckoo can be similar to juvenile Yellow-billed Cuckoo but never shares the cinnamon primaries of the Yellow-billed. Mangrove Cuckoo has black mask, buff breast, larger white tail spots below and lacks cinnamon primaries.

Mangrove cuckoo *Coccyzus minor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

Thin, decurved bill with yellow lower mandible

Black mask

Gray-brown upperparts

Buffy underparts

Long tail, black underneath with large white spots

Sexes similar

United States range restricted to coastal Florida

Similar species:

The Mangrove Cuckoo is similar to Yellow and Black-billed Cuckoos but has buffy, not white, underparts and a black mask.

Greater roadrunner *Geococcyx californianus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches

Large, long-legged, long-tailed cuckoo

Spends much of its time on the ground

Long, thick, dark bill

Bushy crest

Dark head is extensively spotted

Blue patch of bare skin includes eye and is red at its rear margin in males(??)

Pale foreneck and upper breast with dark stripes

Dark back and upperwing has extensive pale edgings creating striped appearance

White bases to primaries show as a crescent on wing in flight

Pale belly

Long, dark tail with white tips to outer tail feathers

Similar species:

None

Smooth-billed ani *Crotophaga ani*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches

Entirely black plumage

Large, heavy bill with hump at base of culmen

Long tail

Sexes similar

Often found in small groups

Inhabits grassy, scrubby areas

United States range restricted to southern Florida

Similar species:

The similar Groove-billed Ani has a smaller bill with a smooth curvature to the culmen and grooves (often difficult to see). They are best told apart by voice. Grackles have much thinner bills.

Groove-billed ani *Crotophaga sulcirostris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches

Entirely black plumage

Large, heavy bill with smoothly-curved culmen

Bill is grooved

Long tail

Sexes similar

Often found in small groups

Inhabits grassy, scrubby areas

Similar species:

The Groove-billed Ani is similar to the Smooth-billed Ani but has a smaller bill with a smooth curvature to the culmen and grooves (often difficult to see). They are best told apart by voice. Grackles have much thinner bills.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 44 inches

Large, nocturnal, predatory bird

Large, rounded head

Pale facial disks with dark frame

Tawny and gray upperparts with small black and white spots

White underparts with scattered dark spots

Sexes similar

Sometimes found in barns and silos

Similar species:

The Barn Owl is easily distinguished from other owls by its face pattern. In flight, it lacks dark wrist marks found in Long-eared and Short-eared Owls

Flammulated owl *Otus flammeolus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches Wingspan: 14 inches

Small, nocturnal, predatory bird

Large, rounded head

Dark eyes

Dense streaking on underparts with finer barring

Dark gray or brown upperparts

Sexes similar

Breeds in western United States

Similar species:

The Flammulated Owl is similar in size to screech-owls but lacks large ear tufts and has dark eyes and a different voice. Elf Owl is smaller.

Western screech-owl *Otus kennicottii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8? inches Wingspan: 22? inches

Small, nocturnal, predatory bird

Large, rounded head with ear tufts

Yellow eyes

Dense streaking on underparts with finer barring

Dark gray or brown upperparts

Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Western Screech-Owl is very similar in plumage to Whiskered and Eastern Screech-Owls and is best separated by voice. Other small owls lack prominent ear tufts.

Eastern screech-owl *Otus asio*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8? inches Wingspan: 22? inches

Small, nocturnal, predatory bird

Large, rounded head with ear tufts

Yellow eyes

Dense streaking on underparts with finer barring

Some birds have rusty plumage, others dark gray

Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Eastern Screech-Owl is very similar in plumage to Western and Whiskered Screech-Owls and is best separated by voice. Other small owls lack prominent ear tufts.

Whiskered screech-owl *Otus trichopsis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8? inches Wingspan: 22? inches

Small, nocturnal, predatory bird

Large, rounded head with ear tufts

Yellow eyes

Dense streaking on underparts with finer barring

Dark gray upperparts

Sexes similar

United States range restricted to southeastern Arizona

Similar species:

The Whiskered Screech-Owl is very similar in plumage to Western and Eastern Screech-Owls and is best separated by voice. Other small owls lack prominent ear tufts.

Great horned owl *Bubo virginianus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 20 inches Wingspan: 55 inches

Sexes similar

Very large owl with prominent ear tufts

Yellow eyes and dark bill

Upperparts mottled brown, gray, and black

Pale underparts with fine brown bars

Reddish-brown facial disks bordered by black with a lower border of white

White throat patch

Pale gray form inhabits northern Canada

Similar species:

Only the Long-eared Owl shares the red facial disks and prominent ear tufts, but is much smaller and slenderer, is barred and streaked on the belly, lacks the white throat, and has its ear tufts set closer together.

Snowy owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

Identification Tips:

Length: 20 inches Wingspan: 55 inches

Large, diurnal, predatory bird

Large, rounded head

Yellow eyes

Entirely white plumage with scattered dark spots

Immatures are boldly barred with black

Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Snowy Owl is quite distinctive.

Northern Hawk Owl *Surnia ulula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14 inches Wingspan: 33 inches
Diurnal, predatory bird
Large, rounded head
Yellow eyes
Pale facial disks with dark border
Dark brown upperparts with white spots
Dark barring on underparts
Long, barred tail
Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Northern Hawk Owl can be told from other owls by its long tail and from hawks by its large head with facial disks.

Northern Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium gnoma*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches Wingspan: 15 inches
Predatory bird, more diurnal than other species of owls
Large, rounded head
Yellow eyes
Crown spotted with white
Dark brown upperparts with white spots
Dark streaking on underparts
Long, dark tail with thin, white bars
Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Northern Pygmy-Owl is most similar to the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and is best separated by the white spots, not streaks, on its crown. The vocalizations are also different as well as the habitat. Northern Pygmy-Owl inhabits higher elevations than the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl.

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches Wingspan: 15 inches

Predatory bird, more diurnal than other species of owls

Large, rounded head

Yellow eyes

Crown finely streaked with white

Rusty brown upperparts with white spots

Rusty streaking on underparts

Long, dark tail with reddish-brown to pale bars

Sexes similar

United States range includes southern Arizona and Texas

Similar species:

The Northern Pygmy-Owl is most similar to the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and is best separated by its spotted not streaked crown, voice and habitat. The Northern Pygmy-Owl is found at higher elevations than the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl.

Elf owl *Micrathene whitneyi*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches Wingspan: 15 inches

Very small, nocturnal, predatory bird

Large, rounded head

Yellow eyes

Brown upperparts with white spots

Brown and gray breast with white belly

Sexes similar

Inhabits the southwestern United States

Similar species:

The Elf Owl can be told from other owls by its small size, yellow eyes, short tail and by voice.

Burrowing owl *Athene cunicularia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches Wingspan: 22 inches

Sexes similar

Fairly small, long-legged, ground-dwelling owl

Yellow eyes and yellow bill

Brown upperparts with white spotting on the back, wings, and head

Dark chest with white spotting

White belly with brown barring

Face mostly whitish with brown auriculars

Juvenile has buffy to whitish underparts

Similar species:

No other owl is so long-legged and is found in the same habitat.

Spotted owl *Strix occidentalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches Wingspan: 42 inches

Large, nocturnal, predatory bird

Large, rounded head

Dark eyes

Brown facial disks with dark border

Rich brown upperparts with white spots

White underparts with brown cross-shaped markings

Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Spotted Owl is similar to the Barred Owl but has cross-shaped markings on the underparts where the Barred Owl is alternately barred on the breast and streaked on the belly. Barred Owls are grayer than Spotted Owls. Great Gray Owl is much larger with yellow eyes. Great Horned and Long-eared Owls have ear tufts.

Barred owl *Strix varia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches Wingspan: 44 inches

Sexes similar

Rather large owl

Dark eyes and yellow bill

Back brown, mottled with pale spots and dark bars

Underparts pale with long, brown streaks

Chest pale with brown barring

Face pale with dark concentric rings surrounding eye

Similar species:

The Spotted Owl is most similar, but can be separated with attention to its barred, not streaked, underpart coloration. Short-eared Owl is similar in size, but is not barred on the chest nor is as heavily streaked below, does not share the concentric rings in the facial disks, has yellow eyes and a dark bill, and is found in quite different habitat. Great Gray Owl is superficially similar, but much larger, gray rather than brown below, and has differently patterned underparts.

Great gray owl *Strix nebulosa*

Identification Tips:

Length: 22 inches Wingspan: 60 inches

Very large, nocturnal, predatory bird

Large, rounded head

Yellow eyes

Gray facial disks with darker rings

Gray upperparts with paler barring

Pale underparts with large, dark irregular streaks

Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Great Gray Owl is larger and grayer than other owls and lacks ear tufts.

Short-eared owl *Asio flammeus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches Wingspan: 41 inches

Sexes similar

Medium-sized owl

Perhaps the most aerial owl, the Short-eared courses low over fields and marshes at dawn and dusk with floppy, moth-like wingbeats

Yellow eyes and dark bill

Upperparts mottled brown and white, with darker bars on flight feathers

Breast tawny with darker streaks fading to a white belly with diffuse darker streaking

Face relatively dark and unpatterned

In flight, pale underwings with prominent black wrist marks are obvious

Similar species:

Often easily identified by behavior alone, the Short-eared is most readily confused with the Long-eared Owl. In flight, both species share similar underwing coloration, and often a good view of a sitting bird is needed to discern the many obvious differences such as the Long-eared Owl's ear tufts, red facial disks, barred underparts, and lack of tawny coloration. Potentially confused with the Barred Owl, but easily distinguished by eye and bill color, face and underpart patterning. Barn Owl occupies similar habitat but is much paler and lacks streaking on the underparts.

Boreal owl *Aegolius funereus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches Wingspan: 24 inches

Small, nocturnal, predatory bird

Large, rounded head

Yellow eyes

Mostly pale facial disks with dark border

Pale bill

Dark brown upperparts with large white spots

Pale underparts with large, dark irregular streaks

Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Boreal Owl is most likely to be confused with the Northern Saw-whet Owl but lacks brown in the face, has a pale bill, has a dark border to the face and darker brown upperparts.

Northern Saw-whet owl *Aegolius acadicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches Wingspan: 17 inches
Small, nocturnal, predatory bird
Large, rounded head
Yellow eyes
Brownish facial disks
Dark bill
Brown upperparts with large white spots
Pale underparts with large, dark irregular streaks
Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Boreal Owl is most likely to be confused with the Northern Saw-whet Owl but lacks brown in the face, has a pale bill, has a dark border to the face and darker brown upperparts. Screech-owls have ear tufts. Pygmy-owls have longer tails and different markings.

Lesser nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches Wingspan: 21 inches

Very short bill

Upperparts with gray and white patterning

Brown and white patterning on head and chest

Underparts with dark bars

Dark wings with conspicuous pale patch 2/3 of the way out from the bend in the wing

Dark tail with thin white bars

Adult male:

White throat

Adult female:

Buff throat

Buff spots on inner primaries

Similar species:

Separated from all other nightjars except nighthawks the pale patch in the wing. Lesser Nighthawk is similar to Common and Antillean nighthawks but tends to have its white patch farther out (2/3 of the way from the bend of the wing) its wing. Female Lesser Nighthawks can be identified with very good views of the spread wing. All three species are easily identified by call.

Common nighthawk *Chordeiles minor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches Wingspan: 23 inches

Very short bill

Blackish upperparts with gray and white patterning

Brown and white patterning on head and chest

Underparts with heavy dark bars

Dark wings with conspicuous pale patch midway out from bend in wing

Dark tail with thin white bars

Adult male:

White throat

Adult female:

Buff throat

Similar species:

Separated from all nightjars except nighthawks by the pale patch in the wing. Lesser Nighthawk is similar but tends to have its white patch farther out (2/3 of the way from the bend of the wing) its wing. Antillean nighthawk is somewhat buffier, but is probably not safely identified by sight in the field All three species are easily identified by call.

Antillean nighthawk *Chordeiles gundlachii*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Very short bill

Blackish upperparts with buff and gray patterning

Pale underparts with barring

White patch at base of primaries visible in flight

Forked tail

Active at dawn, dusk and at night

United States ranged restricted to southern Florida

Similar species:

The Antillean Nighthawk is very similar to other nighthawks and is best distinguished by call.

Common pauraque *Nyctidromus albicollis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

Very short bill

Brownish upperparts with buff and black patterning

Pale underparts with barring

White patch at base of primaries visible in flight

Long tail-male has white patches

Nocturnal-often sits on roads

United States ranged restricted to southern Texas

Similar species:

The white wing patches of the Common Pauraque are similar to the wing patches in nighthawks but note the longer tail, browner upperparts and different call. Other goatsuckers lack the white wing patches and have different calls.

Common poorwill *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Sexes similar (with minor differences in tail pattern)

Very short bill

Upperparts with gray and black patterning

Underparts pale with diffuse dark mottling

Dark throat bordered below with white patch

Gray tail with darker barring and pale tips to outer tail feathers

Similar species:

Separated from nighthawks by the lack of a pale patch in the wing. Told from other nightjars by small size, wingtips which reach the tip of the short tail at rest, and pale gray coloration. All nightjars are easily identified by their distinctive songs.

Chuck-will's-widow *Caprimulgus carolinensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

Very short bill

Long tail

Mottled brownish underparts

Brown and white patterning on head and chest

Brown underparts with thin dark bars

Buff throat

Adult male:

White patch borders lower margin of black throat

Brown and black barred tail with white inner margins to outer tail feathers

Adult female:

Buff patch borders lower margin of throat

Entirely brown tail barred with black

Similar species:

Separated from nighthawks by the lack of a pale patch in the wing. Common Poorwill is smaller and its wings extend to the tail at rest. Chuck-will's-widow is significantly larger and longer tailed than the Whip-poor-will, is overall a rich brown rather than gray, and has a buff (rather than black) throat. All nightjars are easily identified by their distinctive songs

Whip-poor-will *Caprimulgus vociferus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches

Very short bill

Medium length tail

Upperparts mottled heavily with gray, black, and brown

Underparts pale with gray and black mottling

Black throat

Adult male:

White patch borders lower margin of black throat

White tips to the outer tail feathers

Adult female:

Buff patch borders lower margin of throat

Buff tips to the outer tail feathers

Similar species:

Separated from nighthawks by the lack of a pale patch in the wing. Common Poorwill is smaller and its wings extend to the tail at rest. Chuck-will's-widow is significantly larger and longer tailed, is overall a rich brown rather than gray, and has a buff (rather than black) throat. All nightjars are easily identified by their distinctive songs.

Black swift *Cypseloides niger*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Sexes similar

Juvenile similar to adult

Small aerial bird with cigar-shaped body and crescent-shaped wings

Tail short and strongly notched

Entirely blackish plumage

Similar species:

No other swift in the U.S.A. approaches the Black Swift in size. Chimney and Vaux's Swift are similarly patterned but are paler about the throat and breast, and have very short, blunt tails. White-throated Swift is more similar but is easily distinguished by its white throat and flank patches.

Chimney swift *Chaetura pelagica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches Wingspan: 12.5 inches

Sexes similar

Juvenile similar to adult

Small aerial bird with cigar-shaped body and crescent-shaped wings

Short tail bluntly squared off

Plumage sooty gray above with slightly paler rump

Buff throat darkening to sooty gray on belly

Underwings pale gray

Similar species:

All swallows have longer tails, usually with a notch or fork, and broader wings. Black Swift and White-throated Swift have forked tails and different patterning below. Vaux's Swift is extremely similar but is somewhat smaller, with shorter wings, a paler rump and throat, and a different call.

Vaux's swift *Chaetura vauxi*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Sexes similar

Juvenile similar to adult

Small aerial bird with cigar-shaped body and crescent-shaped wings

Short tail bluntly squared off

Plumage sooty gray above with paler rump

Whitish throat darkening to sooty gray on belly

Underwings pale gray

Similar species:

All swallows have longer tails, usually with a notch or fork, and broader wings. Black and White-throated Swifts have forked tails and different patterning below. Chimney Swift is extremely similar but is larger, with longer wings, a darker rump and throat, and a different call.

White-throated swift *Aeronautes saxatalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches Wingspan: 14 inches

Sexes similar

Juvenile similar to adult

Small aerial bird with cigar-shaped body and crescent-shaped wings

Short tail strongly notched at tip

Black upperparts

Whitish throat extending down central belly and tapering to blunt point

Black belly and sides of breast with isolated white spot on flanks

Underwings pale gray

Similar species:

All swallows have longer tails, usually with a notch or fork, and broader wings. Black Swift and White-throated Swifts have forked tails and different patterning below. Chimney Swift is extremely similar but is larger, with longer wings, a darker rump and throat, and a different call.

Broad-billed hummingbird *Cynanthus latirostris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.25 inches

Long, thin bill

United States ranged restricted to southeastern Arizona and west Texas

Adult male:

Bill has bright red base

Blue throat

Green head and body

White undertail coverts

Black forked tail

Female/Immature:

Dark bill with reddish lower mandible

Thin white line behind eye

Grayish throat and underparts

Green upperparts and sides

Tail has pale outer tips

Immature male similar to female but may have blue feathers in throat

Similar species:

The female Broad-billed Hummingbird can be told from most other female hummingbirds by its reddish lower mandible. White-eared Hummingbird has a broader white stripe behind the eye.

White-eared hummingbird *Hylocharis leucotis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3 inches

Long, thin bill with bright red base

Broad white stripe behind eye

Black face

Purple forehead and chin

Green throat and upperparts

Grayish belly and undertail coverts

Female and immatures duller with spotted throat

United States ranged restricted to southeastern Arizona

Similar species:

The broad white stripe behind the eye identifies this species.

Buff-bellied hummingbird *Amazilia yucateensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.75 inches

Long, thin bill with reddish base

Metallic green head and breast

Green back

Buff belly

Sexes similar

United States ranged restricted to Gulf Coast.

Similar species:

The fairly large size, green breast and buff belly identify this species.

Violet-crowned hummingbird *Amazilia violiceps*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.5 inches

Long, thin bill with bright red base

Purple crown

Green back

Clear white underparts

Sexes similar

United States ranged restricted to southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico

Similar species:

The red-based bill, white underparts and purple crown identify this species.

Blue-throated hummingbird *Lampornis clemenciae*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches

Long, thin bill

Large hummingbird

White stripe behind eye

White malar streak

Green upperparts

Grayish underparts

Black, rounded tail with broad white tips

United States ranged restricted to southeastern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico and west Texas. Stray elsewhere.

Adult male:

Blue throat (black in poor light)

Similar species:

The male Blue-throated Hummingbird is unmistakable. Female is similar to female Magnificent Hummingbird but has large white tips to tail and white malar streak. Other hummingbirds are much smaller.

Magnificent hummingbird *Eugenes fulgens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Long, thin bill

Large hummingbird

White spot behind eye

Dark blackish-green upperparts

United States ranged restricted to southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico

Adult male:

Metallic green throat (black in poor light)

Black breast

Purple crown

Gray undertail coverts

Black forked tail

Adult female:

Dull gray underparts

Dark, rounded tail with grayish-white corners

Similar species:

The male Magnificent Hummingbird is unmistakable. Female is similar to female Blue-throated Hummingbird but lacks large white tips to tail and white malar streak. Other hummingbirds are much smaller.

Lucifer hummingbird *Calothorax lucifer*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.25 inches

Long, thin, decurved bill

Green upperparts

White spot behind eye

United States ranged restricted to southeastern Arizona and west Texas. Stray elsewhere.

Adult male:

Purple throat (black in poor light) longest at sides

Grayish underparts with greenish and rusty sides

Black, deeply forked tail

Adult female:

Pale throat

Buffy breast

Pale belly

Green tail-outer feathers have rusty base, black middle and white tip

Immature male similar to female but may have a few purple throat feathers

Similar species:

Unlike other North American hummingbirds, the Lucifer Hummingbird has a distinctly decurved bill. The male Lucifer Hummingbird can be told by its purple throat and forked tail. The female has a buffy breast unlike similar species.

Ruby-throated hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 3 inches
- Long, straight, thin bill
- Small hummingbird
- Bright green back and crown
- White underparts with greenish flanks

Adult male:

- Iridescent scarlet gorget
- Black face and chin
- Entirely dark forked tail

Female/Immature:

- White chin and throat with variable amounts of thin dark streaking
- Dark, shallowly-forked tail with white tips on outer tail feathers

Similar species:

No other hummingbirds occur regularly over much of its range, but there is some overlap in the southeast and Texas. The Broad-tailed Hummingbird is similar to the male Ruby-throated, but has a rosy-red throat rather than a scarlet or ruby throat patch. Male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds can also be identified by their black face and chin, and their distinctive call notes, and the lack of a wing whistle produced by their wings in flight. Females are similar to a number of other female hummingbirds, and are best told from the Calliope Hummingbird and species in the genus *Selasphorus* by their lack of rufous on the flanks and in the tail. Anna's Hummingbirds are larger and have grayer chests, while Costa's Hummingbirds differ only in subtleties of facial pattern and tail pattern. Black-chinned Hummingbird females are essentially identical, and are not safely separable from female Ruby-throateds except in the hand. Best told from all species except Black-chinned Hummingbird by call.

Black-chinned hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 3 inches
- Long, straight, thin bill
- Small hummingbird
- Bright green back and crown
- White underparts with greenish flanks

Adult male:

- Iridescent purple gorget at lower throat
- Black face, chin, and upper throat
- Entirely dark tail

Female/Immature:

- White chin and throat with variable amounts of thin dark streaking
- Dark tail with white tips on outer tail feathers

Similar species:

Males unmistakable with a good view. Females are similar to a number of other female hummingbirds, and are best told from the Calliope Hummingbird and species in the genus *Selasphorus* by their lack of rufous on the flanks and in the tail. Anna's Hummingbirds are larger and have grayer chests, while Costa's Hummingbirds differ only in subtleties of facial pattern and tail pattern. Black-chinned Hummingbird females are not safely separable from female Ruby-throateds except in the hand. Best told from all species except Ruby-throated Hummingbird by call.

Anna's hummingbird *Calypte anna*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 3.5 inches
- Long, straight, thin bill
- Medium-sized hummingbird
- Green back
- Gray underparts with greenish flanks

Adult male:

- Rosy-red iridescent crown and gorget
- Entirely dark tail

Female/Immature:

- Green crown
- Gray chin and throat with variable amounts of thin dark streaking or rosy red spots depending on age and sex
- Dark tail with white tips on outer tail feathers

Similar species:

Males unmistakable when red crown is seen but beware of poor lighting conditions. Females and immatures are fairly large and gray breasted, and often show the distinctive rosy-red gorget color on the throat. Costa's and the two Archilochus hummingbirds are the most likely identification contenders, but are smaller with whiter breasts and different call notes.

Costa's hummingbird *Calypte costae*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 3 inches
- Long, straight, thin bill
- Small hummingbird
- Bright green back and crown
- White underparts with greenish flanks

Adult male:

- Iridescent purple crown and gorget, with long pointed extension far down neck
- Entirely dark tail

Female/Immature:

- White chin and underparts
- Dark tail with white tips on outer tail feathers

Similar species:

The adult male Lucifer Hummingbird is similar in plumage to the adult male Costa's, but is easily separated in the narrow zone of overlap between the two species by its strongly decurved bill, green crown and deeply forked tail. The female Lucifer is strongly buffy below and has a decurved bill and forked tail. The female Costa's is similar to the female and immature Anna's, but typically is smaller, with a cleaner throat and whiter underparts. Archilochus hummingbird females are also similar but tend to have streaked throats. Female Costa's are separable also by subtleties of tail pattern and call notes.

Calliope hummingbird *Stellula calliope*

Identification Tips:

Length: 2.75 inches

Very small hummingbird

Relatively short tail does not extend past wings at rest

Relatively short bill

Bright green back and crown

White underparts

Adult male:

Gorget composed of purple-red streaks on white background

Greenish flanks

Dark tail without white tips

Female/Immature:

White chin and throat with thin dark streaking

White underparts with pale salmon wash on flanks

Dark tail with a trace of rufous color and white tips on the outer tail feathers

Similar species:

The smallest North American hummingbird, females are best separated by their short tail and small size. The rufous wash on the flanks should safely separate females and immatures from all species except the three *Selasphorus* hummingbirds, which all typically have more rufous in the tail. The streaked gorget of adult males should make them instantly identifiable. Calliope is the only species where the tail does not extend past the wings when at rest.

Broad-tailed hummingbird *Selasphorus platycercus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.75 inches

Long, straight, thin bill

Medium-sized hummingbird

Bright green back and crown

White underparts with buff and green wash on flanks

Adult male:

Rosy-red gorget

Mostly dark tail

Distinctive wing whistle when flying

Female/Immature:

White chin and throat with variable amounts of thin dark streaking

Dark tail with rufous bases and white tips on outer tail feathers

Similar species:

Male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have deeper red throats, black masks, are somewhat smaller, and lack the Broad-tailed Hummingbird's distinctive wing whistle. Females are larger and bigger-tailed than the small Calliope Hummingbird, but are similar to Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds. Broad-tailed is best identified by its larger size, large, broad tail, and restricted amounts of rufous in the tail, more blue-green back, whiter undertail coverts, as well as its call note.

Rufous hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.5 inches

Long, straight, thin bill

Small hummingbird

Adult male:

Rufous face, back, flanks, rump, and tail

Occasionally variants occur with variably greenish backs and crowns

Bright orange-red gorget

White breast

Female/Immature:

Green back and crown

White underparts

White throat variably marked with dark streaks (immatures) or central group of red spots (adult females)

Rufous wash on flanks

Immature males similar to adult female but central tail feathers like adult male (rufous with dark tips)

Dark tail with rufous at the bases of the retrices, and white tips on the outer three retrices

Similar species:

Adult males can be confused only with Allen's Hummingbird. Rufous-backed males are certainly Rufous Hummingbirds, but care should be taken as some Rufous have variable amounts of green on the back and crown. Females and immatures are easily identified as a *Selasphorus* by the rufous in the tail. Female and immature Broad-tailed Hummingbirds have less rufous on the inner tail feathers, whitish, not rusty undertail coverts and more blue-green backs, as well as being larger with different calls. Female and immature Calliope Hummingbirds are smaller with shorter bills and less rusty backs. Rufous and Allen's females and immatures are inseparable in the field.

Allen's hummingbird *Selasphorus sasin*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3 inches

Long, straight, thin bill

Small hummingbird

Adult male:

Rufous face, flanks, rump, and tail

Green back and crown

Orange-red gorget

White breast

Female/Immature:

Green back and crown

White underparts

White throat variably marked with dark streaks (immatures) or central group of red spots (adult females)

Rufous wash on flanks

Immature males similar to adult female but central tail feathers like adult male (rufous with dark tips)

Dark tail with rufous at the bases of the retrices, and white tips on the outer three retrices

Similar species:

Some adult male of Rufous Hummingbirds have variable amounts of green in the back and crown. Females and immatures are easily identified as a *Selasphorus* by the rufous in the tail. Female and immature Broad-tailed Hummingbirds have less rufous on the inner tail feathers, whitish, not rusty undertail coverts and more blue-green backs, as well as being larger with different calls. Female and immature Calliope Hummingbirds are smaller with shorter bills and less rusty backs. Rufous and Allen's females and immatures are inseparable in the field.

Elegant trogon *Trogon elegans*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Short, yellow bill

Black mask and pale eye ring

Dark green breast, head and upperparts

White breast band

Red belly and undertail coverts

Long tail, barred underneath and squared at tip

Female duller than male with less red underneath

United States range restricted to southeastern Arizona

Similar species:

The Elegant Trogon is similar to the rarer Eared Trogon but has a white breast band and a barred undersurface to the tail. Eared Trogon lacks the breast band and has a mostly white undersurface to the tail.

Ringed kingfisher *Ceryle torquata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15.5 inches

Long, stout bill

Blue-gray, ragged crest

White throat and collar

Blue-gray upperparts

Male has rusty breast and belly, female has rusty belly, blue-gray breast and white breast band

Barred tail

United States range restricted to southern Texas

Similar species:

The Ringed Kingfisher is larger than the Belted Kingfisher and has a rusty belly and different call.

Belted kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon*

Identification Tips:

Length: 12 inches

Large, short-legged, big-headed, big-billed bird

Hovers over water and dives headfirst into water in pursuit of fish

Slate blue head, with white spot near lores

White chin, throat and neck

Slate blue breastband

Slate blue back and upperwing coverts with small white spots

Slate blue tail with numerous dark and light bands

Adult male:

Entirely white belly

Adult female:

White underparts with reddish belly band extending down flanks

Similar species:

In the United States, only the Ringed Kingfisher of south Texas is similar. It is superficially similar but is larger and has an entirely reddish belly band.

Green kingfisher *Chloroceryle americana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches

Long, stout bill

Green crest

White throat and collar

Green upperparts with white spotting

Male has rusty breast, female has dark spotting on breast

White belly and undertail coverts with dark spots

United States range restricted to southern Texas

Similar species:

The Green Kingfisher is smaller than other kingfishers and lacks blue-gray coloration.

Lewis's woodpecker *Melanerpes lewis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches

Sexes similar

Fairly large, dark, woodpecker

Flies with slow, steady crow-like wingbeats

Adult:

Dark bronze-green head, back, upperwings, rump, and uppertail

Gray collar and upper breast

Deep red face

Pink belly

Juvenile:

Bronze-green upperparts

Brownish head and chest (with faint barring)

Pink belly

Similar species:

Wholly dark plumage sets this woodpecker apart from all others. No other woodpecker in the U.S.A. has wings that are entirely solid in color. This and its distinctive crow-like flaps, which contrast markedly with the undulating flight of other woodpeckers, render it easily identifiable at a great distance.

Red-headed woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches

Sexes similar

Fairly large, strikingly black and white woodpecker

Adult:

Bright red head and neck

White breast, belly, rump, and vent

Black back and wings with prominent white secondaries visible in flight and at rest

Black tail

Juvenile:

Mottled brown head and neck

White breast, belly, and rump variably marked with brown streaking

Dark brown back and upperwings with paler edgings

White secondaries broken by brown lateral bars

Dark brown tail

Similar species:

Entirely red head of adult should easily separate it from all but Red-breasted Sapsucker (which does not overlap in range, and has patterned back, yellow belly, and a different wing pattern). Note the Red-headed Woodpecker's different position of the white wing patch (especially in flight), white belly, and larger size. It may be confused with the largely dissimilar Red-bellied Woodpecker at times, but attention to the gray face and throat, and barred back and wings of the Red-bellied should eliminate any confusion.

Acorn woodpecker *Melanerpes formicivorus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Medium-sized woodpecker

White eye

Black head

Black area surrounding bill is in turn surrounded by white lower face, forehead, and throat

Black chest, nape, back, and wings

White bases to outer primaries appear as small white crescent in flight

White rump

White belly and vent, with fine dark streaks on flanks

Black tail

Adult male:

Red cap extends back from white forehead

Adult female:

Red cap at rear of head separated from white forehead by black area at top of head

Similar species:

White-headed Woodpecker lacks white rump and has an entirely white face and crown, and a black belly. The only medium-sized woodpecker with pale eyes.

Gila woodpecker *Melanerpes uropygialis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.25 inches

Medium-sized woodpecker

Tan head, throat, breast, and belly

Back strongly barred with black and white

Black wings barred and spotted with white

White bases to the primaries appear as white crescent in the hand in flight

White rump and uppertail coverts with sparse dark barring

Dark tail with barred central tail feathers

Adult male:

Small, red cap on top of head

Similar species:

No similar species overlap in range. Red-bellied Woodpecker similar but both sexes have extensive red on the head and nape, and paler underparts. Golden-fronted Woodpecker shows yellow on the head, is paler below and has dark, unmarked, central retricies.

Golden-fronted woodpkr *Melanerpes aurifrons*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches

Medium-sized woodpecker

Pale gray head, throat, breast, and belly

Yellow nape patch and yellow spot above bill

Back strongly barred with black and white

Black wings barred and spotted with white

White bases to the primaries appear as white crescent in the hand in flight

White rump and uppertail coverts

Dark tail with dark central retricies

Adult male:

Small red cap on top of head

Similar species:

Gila Woodpecker is darker brown about the head and belly, lacks the yellow nape and spot above bill, and has black and white barring on the central retricies. Red-bellied Woodpecker overlaps in range and hybrids are known so caution should be exercised when making identifications where they cooccur. Note the Red-bellied's red nape and barred central retricies in all plumages.

Red-bellied woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches

Medium-sized woodpecker

Pale gray face, throat, breast, and belly

Back strongly barred with black and white

Black wings barred and spotted with white

White bases to the primaries appear as white crescent in the hand in flight

White rump and uppertail coverts with sparse dark markings

Dark tail with black and white barring on the central retricies

Adult male:

Red cap extending from bill to nape

Adult female:

Red nape patch, gray crown, and red spot above bill

Similar species:

Gila Woodpecker is darker brown about the head and belly, lacks the red nape and spot above bill. Golden-fronted Woodpecker overlaps in Texas where hybrids are known so identifications should be made with caution and attention to all details of plumage. Note the Red-bellied's red nape and barred central retricies in all plumages.

Williamson's sapsucker *Sphyrapicus thyroideus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.25 inches

Medium-sized woodpecker

White rump

Dark tail with black and white barring on centralmost and outermost retricies

Male:

Black head, breast, and back

White postocular stripe extends to nape

Pale moustachial stripe is fairly thin

Red throat in adult male, white throat in immature male

Black wings, with white barring on flight feathers barred and bold white patch on wing coverts

Bright yellow belly, with some black and white barring on flanks

Female:

Entirely pale brown head

Pale back barred with black

Dark brown wings spotted and barred with white

Heavily barred breast and sides

Pale yellow belly

Similar species:

Male distinctive, and while his white patch on the secondary coverts identifies him as a sapsucker, he is patterned like no other sapsucker (or woodpecker). The female is somewhat more subtle, and is the only sapsucker to lack a white wing patch, but no other woodpecker shares her broadly pale back barred with brown and brown wings spotted with white.

Yellow-bellied sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.75? inches

Medium-sized woodpecker

Black head traversed by white postocular stripe extending down neck

Red forehead

Pale moustachial stripe offsets black chest and complete, thick black border to throat

Black back with faint white bars

Black wings, with white barring on flight feathers and bold white patch on wing coverts

Yellow breast fades to whitish lower belly and vent, and is streaked sparsely about the flanks

White rump

Dark tail with black and white barring on centralmost and outermost retricies

Very rarely shows red nape spot

Adult male:

Red throat

Adult female:

White throat

Juvenile:

Wings and back patterned more or less like adult

Head brownish and streaked, with weak postocular stripe and moustachial stripe

Reddish wash on forehead

Pale chest barred heavily with brown

Yellowish belly sparsely barred and streaked with brown

Juvenal plumage retained until first spring

Similar species:

White patch on wing coverts sets sapsuckers apart from all other woodpeckers. Male Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are distinguished from male Red-naped only by the red nape spot and incomplete frame to red throat of Red-naped Sapsucker. Females are somewhat easier to distinguish, as they differ in these characters, as well as having quite different throat patterns (white in Yellow-bellied, red and white in Red-naped). It is worth noting that any sapsucker in juvenal plumage after late fall must be a Yellow-bellied. Beware of rare hybrid Yellow-bellied x Red-naped Sapsuckers, and the occasional Yellow-bellied Sapsucker which may show a red nape spot.

Red-naped sapsucker *Sphyrapicus nuchalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.75? inches

Medium-sized woodpecker

Black head traversed by white postocular stripe extending down neck

Red forehead

Red spot in postocular stripe as it meets the nape

Pale moustachial stripe offsets black chest and black border to throat

Black border to throat incomplete, narrows or is broken at its midpoint

Black back with faint white bars

Black wings, with white barring on flight feathers and bold white patch on wing coverts

Yellow breast fades to whitish lower belly and vent, and is streaked sparsely about the flanks

White rump

Dark tail with black and white barring on centralmost and outermost retricies

Adult male:

Red throat

Adult female:

Upper throat white, lower throat red

Juvenile:

Wings and back patterned more or less like adult

Head brownish and streaked, with weak postocular stripe and moustachial stripe

Pale chest barred with brown

Yellowish belly sparsely barred and streaked with brown

Juvenile plumage lost by mid-September

Similar species:

White patch on wing coverts sets sapsuckers apart from all other woodpeckers. Red-naped can hybridize with Red-breasted, so attention should be paid in zone of overlap for birds showing unusually large amounts of red about the head or breast. Males are distinguished from male Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers only by the red nape spot and incomplete frame to red throat of Red-naped Sapsucker. Females are somewhat easier to distinguish, as they differ in these characters, as well as having quite different throat patterns (white in Yellow-bellied, red and white in Red-naped). It is worth noting that any sapsucker in juvenal plumage after late fall must be a Yellow-bellied. Beware of rare hybrid Yellow-bellied x Red-naped Sapsuckers, and the occasional Yellow-bellied Sapsucker which may show a red nape spot.

Red-breasted sapsucker *Sphyrapicus ruber*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.75? inches

Medium-sized woodpecker

Red head and upper chest

Whitish feathering at lores at base of bill

Black back with faint bars

Black wings, with white barring on flight feathers and bold white patch on wing coverts

Yellow belly fades to whitish lower belly and vent, and is streaked sparsely about the flanks

White rump

Dark tail with black and white barring on centralmost and outermost retricies

Northern subspecies (*S. r. ruber*):

Deeper red head and breast

Black back with yellowish bars

White area limited to area above bill

Southern subspecies (*S.r.daggetti*):

Paler red head and breast

Black back with whitish bars

White areas above bill extends diagonally down slightly across cheek

Juvenile:

Wings and back patterned more or less like adult

Head brownish and streaked, with weak postocular stripe and moustachial stripe

Pale chest barred lightly with brown

Yellowish belly sparsely barred and streaked with brown

Juvenile plumage retained until mid-September

Similar species:

White patch on wing coverts sets sapsuckers apart from all other woodpeckers. Only the Red-headed Woodpecker is vaguely similar in pattern, but does not overlap in range and could be easily distinguished by its white secondaries (rather than wing coverts). Beware of hybridization with Red-naped Sapsucker as well, and use caution when identifying atypical birds. The juvenal plumage is similar to Red-naped and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, but is very briefly held and is paler about the chest.

Ladder-backed woodpecker *Picoides scalaris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Small black and white woodpecker

Mostly white head

Black triangular border to white auriculars

Buff white throat, breast, and belly

Black spotting on sides of breast and flanks

Black back barred with white extends to nape

Black wings with white spotting on coverts and flight feathers

Black rump

Black tail with white outer tail feathers barred with black

Adult male:

Red crown and hindneck

Black forehead

Adult female:

Black forehead, crown, cap, and hindneck

Similar species:

Nuttall's Woodpecker has black auriculars bordered by white, a cleaner white breast, and less spotting on the flanks. Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers have solid white backs and lack the spotting on the breast and flanks. Hybrids are known with Nuttall's Woodpecker, so identify these species with caution in the narrow zone of overlap.

Nuttall's woodpecker *Picoides nuttallii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.75 inches

Small black and white woodpecker

Black head

White postocular stripe curves around to almost meet white moustachial stripe and appears as a pale border to dark auriculars

White throat, breast, and belly

Small amounts of black spotting on sides of breast and flanks

Black back barred with white does not extend to black nape

Black wings with white spotting on coverts and flight feathers

Black rump

Black tail with white outer tail feathers barred with black

Adult male:

Red crown

Extensive black forehead

Adult female:

Black forehead, crown, cap, and hindneck

Similar species:

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers have solid white backs and lack the spotting on the breast and flanks. Nuttall's Woodpecker has black auriculars bordered incompletely by white, a cleaner white breast, a different amount of red on the head of the male, less barring on the back, and less spotting on the flanks in comparison to the Ladder-backed Woodpecker. However, hybrids are known between these two species so identify each with caution in the narrow zone of overlap.

Downy woodpecker *Picoides pubescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Very small black and white woodpecker

Very short bill

Mostly black head set off by broad white supercilium and lower border to auriculars

Black nape

White back

Black wings with white spotting on coverts and flight feathers

White underparts

Black rump

Black tail with white outer tail feathers barred with black

Adult male:

Red spot at rear of head

Similar species:

Other small black and white woodpeckers such as Ladder-backed, Strickland's, Red-cockaded and Nuttall's have longer bills, barred backs, and patterning on the chests. Black-backed woodpecker is easily distinguished by the darker face, black back, and barred flanks. Three-toed Woodpecker is best distinguished by the darker face and barred flanks, since some races can have white backs. Juvenile Hairy Woodpeckers on the Queen Charlotte Islands have barred outer tail feathers and such birds should be carefully separated from Downy Woodpeckers by their larger size and larger bills. Hairy Woodpecker is most similar, but is larger, with a longer bill, entirely white outer tail feathers, and a different call.

Hairy woodpecker *Picoides villosus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches

Medium-sized black and white woodpecker

Fairly long bill

Mostly black head set off by broad white supercilium and lower border to auriculars

Black nape

White back

Black wings with white spotting on coverts and flight feathers

White underparts

Black rump

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Significant racial variation can result in juveniles with barred outer tail feathers (Queen Charlotte Islands), juveniles with barred backs and flanks (Maritime provinces) and birds with brown feathering replacing the black (Pacific Northwest).

Adult male:

Red spot at rear of head

Similar species:

Other black and white woodpeckers such as Ladder-backed, Strickland's, Red-cockaded and Nuttall's have shorter bills, barred backs, and patterning on the chests. Black-backed woodpecker is easily distinguished by the darker face, black back, and barred flanks. Three-toed Woodpecker is best distinguished by the darker face and barred flanks, since some races can have white backs. In the Maritimes juvenile Hairy Woodpeckers can more closely resemble Three-toed Woodpeckers and it is best to concentrate on differences in facial pattern and bill size when identifying birds in this area. Similarly, juvenile Hairy Woodpeckers on the Queen Charlotte Islands can have barred outer tail feathers and such birds should be carefully separated from Downy Woodpeckers by their larger size and larger bills. Downy Woodpecker is most similar, and differs only in its smaller size, proportionally smaller bill, barred outer tail feathers, and different call.

Arizona woodpecker *Picoides arizonae*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25 inches

Pointed bill

Brown crown, cheek, malar streak and upperparts

White border to cheek

White underparts with dark spotting

Male has red nape patch

United States range restricted to southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico

Similar species:

The Strickland's Woodpecker has a uniform brown back that other woodpeckers, flickers and sapsuckers lack.

Red-cockaded woodpecker *Picoides borealis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25 inches

Small, black and white woodpecker

Black cap and nape

White postocular spot

Dark moustachial stripe extends down side of neck

Bold white cheeks and auriculars

White underparts, streaked sparsely with black about sides of breast and flanks

Black back barred with white

Black wings spotted with white in wing coverts and flight feathers

Black rump

Black tail has white outer tail feathers barred with black

Adult male:

Small red spot at rear margin of white face is rarely visible

Similar species:

Easily distinguished from all other small black and white woodpeckers by entirely white cheek and auriculars. Note also the barred back and streaked sides, which distinguish it from Downy and Hairy Woodpecker, the only similar species likely to overlap in range and habitat.

White-headed woodpecker *Picoides albolarvatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.75 inches

Medium-sized woodpecker

White head with dark postocular stripe

Entirely black body plumage, wings and tail except white bases to the outer primaries, which form a white crescent in flight

Adult male:

Red spot at nape

Similar species:

Acorn Woodpecker has white rump and has black about the face and crown, and a white belly.

Three-toed woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches

Medium-sized black and white woodpecker

Black head

Narrow postocular stripe widens towards rear of head and extends down neck

White moustachial stripe

White throat, breast, and belly

White flanks with black barring

White back barred with black (in most races)

Black wings marked with white spots on flight feathers

Black rump

Black tail with white outer tail feathers that are barred inwardly with black

Rocky Mountain subspecies (*P. t. dorsalis*) has an entirely white back

Eastern subspecies (*P. t. bacatus*) has a dark, heavily barred back

Western subspecies (*P. t. fasciatus*) has a whitish, sparsely barred back

Adult male:

Yellow cap at top of head with fuzzy edges

Similar species:

Since Hairy Woodpeckers can have barred backs in the Maritimes provinces and Rocky Mountain Three-toed Woodpeckers have entirely white backs, it is best to concentrate on the barred flanks, much darker face, and narrow postocular stripe of the Three-toed Woodpecker there. Black-backed Woodpecker is distinguished from the Three-toed Woodpecker by the entirely black back, postocular stripe which does not extend down neck, and wholly white outer tail feathers.

Black-backed woodpecker *Picoides arcticus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Medium-sized black and white woodpecker

Black head

Narrow postocular streak

White moustachial stripe widens at rear margin and extends along lower margin of auriculars

White throat, breast, and belly

White flanks with black barring

Entirely black back

Black wings marked with white spots on flight feathers

Black rump

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Adult male:

Yellow cap at top of head with fuzzy edges

Similar species:

All other woodpecker have white or barred backs, and Downy and Hairy woodpeckers have unbarred flanks. Only Three-toed Woodpecker could be confused with the Black-backed Woodpecker. Black-backed Woodpecker is distinguished from the Three-toed Woodpecker by the entirely black back, postocular stripe which does not extend down neck, and wholly white outer tail feathers.

Northern flicker *Colaptes auratus*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 10.5-11 inches
- Large woodpecker
- Brown back and wings barred with black
- Black crescent on upper breast
- Beige breast and belly spotted heavily with black
- White rump (obvious in flight)
- Tail dark above
- Two color forms, formerly separate species

Yellow-shafted

- Tail and underwings are entirely yellow below, and retricies and primaries have yellow shafts
- Red crescent on nape
- Gray cap and nape
- Tan face, chin, and throat
- Adult male has black whisker

Red-shafted

- Tail and underwings are entirely red below, and retricies and primaries have red shafts
- Brown crown
- Gray face
- Adult male has red whisker

Similar species:

The Gilded Flicker can be told from the Red-shafted Flicker by its yellow underwings and from the Yellow-shafted Flicker by its lack of red at the rear of the head, pale brown cap and pale gray face, a paler brown back, and the male sports a red rather than black whisker.

Gilded flicker *Colaptes chrysoides*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Large woodpecker

Pale brown cap and nape

Pale gray face, chin, and throat

Pale brown back and wings barred with black

Black crescent on upper breast

Beige breast and belly spotted heavily with black

White rump (obvious in flight)

Tail dark above

Tail and underwings are entirely yellow below, and retricies and primaries have yellow shafts

Adult male:

Red whisker

Similar species:

Could only be confused with other flickers. The Gilded Flicker has similar wing patterning to Yellow-shafted Flicker, but lacks the red at the rear of the head, has a pale brown cap and pale gray face, a paler brown back, and the male sports a red rather than black whisker. Similarly it differs from Red-shafted Flicker by its paler overall coloration and its yellow underwings and undertail.

Pileated woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches

Very large (crow-sized) black and white woodpecker

Prominent red crest at rear of head

White throat

Entirely black body plumage at rest except a white line that extends from bill down sides of neck to upper flanks

In flight shows pale bases to primaries on upperwing and entirely white underwing covert

Adult male:

Red forehead

Red malar area

Adult female:

Black forehead

Black malar stripe

Similar species:

No other living woodpecker could be confused with the Pileated.

Northern beardless-tyrannulet *Camptostoma imberbe*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.5 inches

Very small flycatcher

Triangular head

Indistinct supercilium

Grayish upperparts

Grayish breast

Yellowish wash to underparts

United States ranged limited to southeastern Arizona and southern Texas

Similar species:

This very small flycatcher is more active than most flycatchers. It is more likely to be confused with a Ruby-crowned Kinglet but it lacks an eye ring. Empidonax flycatchers have eye rings and lack the supercilium of the tyrannulet.

Olive-sided flycatcher *Contopus cooperi*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches

Large, triangular head

Dark face with indistinct eye ring

Fairly large, dark bill

Dark olive upperparts and sides

White throat, center of breast, belly and undertail coverts

White wing bars

White rump feathers sometimes protrude over top of wings

Juveniles have somewhat browner upperparts

Often perches at the very top of a dead snag

Commonly feeds by flying out to catch insects and returning to same perch

Similar species:

The Olive-sided Flycatcher is similar to pewees but has darker sides, larger bill, and white patches above the wings (not always visible). Empidonax flycatchers are much smaller.

Greater pewee *Contopus pertinax*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches

Large, triangular head

Gray upperparts

Fairly large bill with orange lower mandible

Breast somewhat darker than throat

Yellowish belly and undertail coverts

Indistinct wing bars

United States range is parts of Arizona and New Mexico

Commonly feeds by flying out to catch insects and returning to same perch

Similar species:

The Olive-sided Flycatcher is similar to the Greater Pewee but has darker sides, darker bill, and white patches above the wings (not always visible). Western Wood-Pewee is smaller with a darker bill. Empidonax flycatchers are much smaller.

Western wood-pewee *Contopus sordidulus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches

Triangular head

Grayish-olive upperparts

Bill is mostly dark

Breast has olive wash

Whitish throat, belly and undertail coverts

Wing bars

Commonly feeds high in the canopy by flying out to catch insects and returning to same perch

Similar species:

The relatively nondescript Eastern Wood-Pewee is almost identical to the Western Wood-Pewee and is best separated by differences in range and songs. The larger Greater Pewee has an entirely yellow lower mandible. Olive-sided Flycatcher is quite similar but is larger, with more obvious dark sides, larger bill, and sometimes has white patches visible above the wing. Empidonax flycatchers are very similar but appear smaller, have more obvious eye rings (most species), and different vocalizations. Juvenile Eastern Phoebe is similar but has a darker head and wags its tail.

Eastern wood-pewee *Contopus virens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches

Triangular head

Grayish-olive upperparts

Dark bill is yellow at base of lower mandible

Breast has olive wash

Whitish throat, belly and undertail coverts

Wing bars

Commonly feeds high in the canopy by flying out to catch insects and returning to same perch

Similar species:

The relatively nondescript Eastern Wood-Pewee is almost identical to the Western Wood-Pewee and is best separated by differences in range and songs. The larger Greater Pewee has a different range and an entirely yellow lower mandible. Olive-sided Flycatcher is quite similar but is larger, with more obvious dark sides, larger bill, and sometimes has white patches visible above the wing. Empidonax flycatchers are very similar but appear smaller, have more obvious eye rings (most species), and different vocalizations. Juvenile Eastern Phoebe is similar but has a darker head and wags its tail.

Yellow-bellied flycatcher *Empidonax flaviventris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Small flycatcher

Triangular head

White eye ring

Lower mandible orange

Brownish-olive upperparts

Breast has olive wash

Yellowish throat, belly and undertail coverts

Wing bars-white in adults, buffy in immatures

Fall birds have yellower underparts than Spring birds

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences in plumage due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. Some Yellow-bellied Flycatchers can be safely identified by a combination of features: size-they are smaller than all but the Least Flycatcher with short tails and small bills that give them a big-headed look, and are greener above and yellower below than all but the Acadian. Willow and Alder appear longer-tailed, have less obvious eye rings, are browner above and whiter below. Least Flycatchers are grayer above and whiter below. Acadian Flycatchers have larger bills, longer tails, less yellow on the throat and are less active. Empidonax flycatchers from the western United States typically have darker lower mandibles and different ranges. Cordilleran and Pacific Slope Flycatchers are somewhat larger with more oval eye rings. Pewees are larger with whiter underparts and less obvious eye rings.

Acadian flycatcher *Empidonax virescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Small flycatcher

Triangular head

White eye ring

Lower mandible orange

Brownish-olive upperparts

Breast has olive wash

Whitish throat, belly and undertail coverts

Sometimes has yellowish wash to underparts

Wing bars-white in adults, buffy in immatures

Often found in woodlands near water-along rivers, in swamps, et al

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences in plumage due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. A combination of features is helpful for identifying this species: size-it is larger than Yellow-bellied and Least, color-it has greener upperparts and yellower underparts than all but the Yellow-bellied. The Yellow-bellied flycatcher is usually more yellow underneath-especially on the throat, is smaller and more active, and has a smaller bill. Alder and Willow are browner above and whiter below with less obvious eye rings. Least is smaller, grayer above and whiter below and has a smaller bill. Empidonax flycatchers from the western United States have darker lower mandibles, and whiter underparts (Gray and Dusky), darker breasts (Hammond's), or oval eye rings (Pacific Slope and Cordilleran) as well as different ranges. Pewees are larger, browner above, whiter below and have indistinct eye rings.

Alder flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75? inches

Small flycatcher

Triangular head

White eye ring

Lower mandible orange

Brownish-olive upperparts

Breast has olive wash

Whitish throat, belly and undertail coverts

Wing bars

Formerly conspecific with Willow Flycatcher and called Trail's Flycatcher

Breeding habitat is scrubby wet areas-for example, bogs

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences in plumage due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. This species is extremely similar to the Willow flycatcher and was once considered the same species. It often has a more noticeable eye ring and more olive upperparts, however, most individuals cannot be identified by sight. Acadian and Yellow-bellied flycatchers tend to be greener above and yellower below than the Alder Flycatcher. Least Flycatcher is grayer above, shorter-tailed and smaller. Western United States empidonax flycatchers (Dusky, Gray, Hammond's) have mostly dark lower mandibles and more obvious eye rings. Hammond's has a darker breast and grayer throat. Gray is rangier and grayer. Pacific-slope and Cordilleran Flycatchers have oval eye rings.

Willow flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75? inches

Small flycatcher

Triangular head

Indistinct eye ring

Lower mandible orange

Brownish-olive upperparts

Breast has olive wash

Whitish throat, belly and undertail coverts

Wing bars

Formerly conspecific with Alder Flycatcher and called Traill's Flycatcher

Breeding habitat is scrubby areas-for example: bogs, abandoned fields

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences in plumage due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. This species is extremely similar to the Alder flycatcher and was once considered the same species. It often has a less noticeable eye ring and browner, less olive, upperparts; however, most individuals cannot be identified with certainty by sight. Acadian and Yellow-bellied flycatchers tend to be greener above and yellower below than the Willow Flycatcher. Least Flycatcher is grayer above, smaller, shorter-tailed and has a more distinct eye ring. Western United States empidonax flycatchers have darker lower mandibles and more obvious eye rings. Gray is grayer above and rangier. Hammond's is smaller, darker-chested and has a grayer throat. Pewees are quite similar but are larger, have different vocalizations and typically forage higher in the canopy.

Least flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 4.5 inches
- Small flycatcher
- Triangular head
- Eye ring
- Lower mandible orange
- Brownish-olive upperparts
- Breast has olive wash
- Whitish throat, belly and undertail coverts
- Wing bars-white in adults, buffy in juveniles
- Breeding habitat is deciduous woods

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences in plumage due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. The Least Flycatcher is the smallest empidonax with a small bill that makes the head look big. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is similar in size and shape but is greener above and yellower below. Willow and Alder have less obvious eye rings, longer tails and browner upperparts. Acadian is larger, bigger-billed, greener above, and yellower below. In the west, Hammond's is typically darker on the breast. Dusky and Gray are larger and Pacific-slope and Cordilleran have oval eye rings, are larger, and yellower underneath.

Hammond's flycatcher *Empidonax hammondi*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 4.5 inches
- Small flycatcher
- Triangular head
- Eye ring
- Lower mandible mostly dark
- Brownish-olive upperparts
- Breast has dark olive wash
- Grayish throat, whitish belly and undertail coverts
- Underparts can be yellowish

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. The Hammond's flycatcher is typically smaller and darker than the other western United States empidonax flycatchers. It is especially dark on the breast and grayish on the throat. Eastern empids have paler lower mandibles and paler plumage.

Gray flycatcher *Empidonax wrightii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Small flycatcher

Triangular head

Eye ring

Lower mandible mostly dark

Grayish upperparts

Breast has olive wash

Whitish throat, belly and undertail coverts sometimes with yellowish wash

Relatively long tail and legs give this bird a rangy look

Breeding habitat in dry areas

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. The Gray flycatcher is larger, rangier, and grayer above than the other species.

Dusky flycatcher *Empidonax oberholseri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Small flycatcher

Triangular head

Eye ring

Lower mandible mostly dark

Brownish-olive upperparts

Breast has olive wash

Whitish throat, belly and undertail coverts sometimes with yellowish wash

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. The Dusky flycatcher is larger and paler underneath than the Hammond's Flycatcher. Gray flycatcher is grayer above and rangier. Other empidonax flycatchers have mostly yellow lower mandibles.

Pacific-slope flycatcher *Empidonax difficilis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5? inches

Small flycatcher

Triangular head

White oval eye ring

Lower mandible orange

Brownish-olive upperparts

Breast has olive wash

Yellowish throat, belly and undertail coverts

Wing bars

Formerly conspecific with Cordilleran Flycatcher and called Western Flycatcher

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences in plumage due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. This species is very similar to the Cordilleran flycatcher and can best be separated by call, two-syllabled in Cordilleran and upslurred single note in Pacific-slope. Other empidonax flycatchers have more rounded eye rings and less yellow underparts (except the smaller Yellow-bellied).

Cordilleran flycatcher *Empidonax occidentalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5? inches

Small flycatcher

Triangular head

White oval eye ring

Lower mandible orange

Brownish-olive upperparts

Breast has olive wash

Yellowish throat, belly and undertail coverts

Wing bars

Formerly conspecific with Pacific-slope Flycatcher and called Western Flycatcher

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences in plumage due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. This species is very similar to the Pacific-slope flycatcher and can best be separated by call, two-syllabled in Cordilleran and upslurred single note in Pacific-slope. Other empidonax flycatchers have more rounded eye rings and less yellow underparts (except the smaller Yellow-bellied).

Buff-breasted flycatcher *Empidonax fulvifrons*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4 inches

Small flycatcher

Triangular head

Eye ring

Brownish upperparts

Orange-buffy breast

Yellowish underparts

United States ranged limited to southeastern Arizona

Similar species:

The empidonax flycatchers are very difficult to tell apart. The safest way to differentiate them is by habitat, range, and voice in the breeding season. Differences due to molt, wear and age make the plumage quite variable. The Buff-breasted Flycatcher is the easiest empidonax to identify. Its orange-buffy breast, small size and bold eye ring separate it from the other species.

Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Large, triangular head

Black head, breast, back, wings and tail

White belly and undertail coverts

Lacks wing bars

Often wags tail

Juveniles are dark gray with some brown edges to upperparts

Similar species:

The Black Phoebe is quite distinctive.

Eastern phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Dark head

Pale throat and underparts-whitish in Spring, yellowish in Fall

Grayish-olive upperparts

Frequently wags tail

Juvenile has buffy wing bars

Often builds nest under bridges or around buildings near water

Similar species:

The Say's Phoebe has a paler head and darker underparts. Eastern Wood-Pewee has more obvious wing bars and does not wag its tail.

Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches

Large, triangular, brownish head

Brownish-gray upperparts

Grayish throat and breast

Cinnamon belly and undertail coverts

Lacks wing bars

Often wags tail

Juveniles have cinnamon wing bars

Similar species:

The Say's Phoebe is somewhat similar to pewees but is darker, wags its tail and lacks wing bars (adults). Eastern Phoebe has a darker head and whiter underparts.

Vermilion flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Frequents streams and ponds in arid areas

Often wags its tail

Adult male:

Bright red cap, throat and underparts

Black eyeline, nape, back, wings, and tail

Immature male similar to female but has variable amount of red on underparts

Female and immature:

Brown upperparts

White underparts with faint streaks on breast

Undertail coverts tinged pink

Similar species:

The adult male Vermilion Flycatcher is very distinctive. The female and immatures are more nondescript but the streaking on the breast and pink tinge to the undertail coverts distinguish them from other flycatchers

Dusky-capped flycatcher *Myiarchus tuberculifer*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Pale gray throat and breast

Yellow underparts

Brownish-olive upperparts

Pale wing bars and tertial edges

Brown tail with thin rust edges

Bill dark and slim

United States range restricted to southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona-stray elsewhere

Similar species:

The Dusky-capped Flycatcher is most similar to the other flycatchers in the genus *Myiarchus*: Great Crested, Brown-crested and Ash-throated. Great Crested and Brown-crested are larger with larger, thicker bills. Great Crested has a darker gray throat and breast. The Ash-throated has paler yellow underparts. Dusky-capped has a browner, less rusty tail than Great Crested and Ash-throated. The calls of these very similar species are an excellent way to distinguish them. Some species of kingbirds are similar but have paler heads and lack rusty in the tail.

Ash-throated flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 6.5 inches
- Pale gray throat and breast
- Pale yellow underparts
- Brownish-olive upperparts
- Pale wing bars and tertial edges
- Brown tail with rust edges
- Bill dark and slim

Similar species:

The Ash-throated Flycatcher is most similar to the other flycatchers in the genus *Myiarchus*: Great Crested, Brown-crested and Dusky-capped. Great Crested and Brown-crested are larger with larger, thicker bills. Great Crested has a darker gray throat and breast. The Ash-throated has the palest yellow underparts. Dusky-capped and Brown-crested have browner, less rusty tails. The calls of these very similar species are an excellent way to distinguish them. Some species of kingbirds are similar but have paler heads and lack rusty in the tail.

Great crested flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Gray throat and breast

Yellow underparts

Brownish-olive upperparts

Pale wing bars and tertial edges

Brown tail with rust edges

Pale base to lower mandible

Inhabits forests where it is most often heard before being seen

Similar species:

The Great Crested Flycatcher is most similar to the other flycatchers in the genus *Myiarchus*: Brown-crested, Ash-throated and Dusky-capped. It has a darker gray throat and breast than the other species and has a pale base to its lower mandible. Ash-throated and Dusky-capped are smaller. Ash-throated has paler yellow underparts. Brown-crested and Dusky-capped have browner tails. The calls of these very similar species are an excellent way to distinguish them. Some species of kingbirds are similar but have paler heads and lack rusty in the tail.

Brown-crested flycatcher *Myiarchus tyrannulus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25 inches

Pale gray throat and breast

Yellow underparts

Brownish-olive upperparts

Pale wing bars and tertial edges

Brown tail with thin rust edges

Bill dark and large

Similar species:

The Brown-crested Flycatcher is most similar to the other flycatchers in the genus *Myiarchus*: Great Crested, Ash-throated and Dusky-capped. Ash-throated and Dusky-capped are smaller with smaller, slimmer bills. Great Crested has a darker gray throat and breast while Ash-throated has paler yellow underparts. Ash-throated and Great Crested have rustier tails. The calls of these very similar species are an excellent way to distinguish them. Some species of kingbirds are similar but have paler heads and lack rusty in the tail.

Great kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches

Large black and white striped head

Bright yellow underparts

White throat

Brownish upperparts with rusty edges to wings and tail

Range in United States limited to southern Texas-stray elsewhere

Similar species:

The Great Kiskadee is instantly recognizable.

Sulphur-bellied flycatcher *Myiodynastes luteiventris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.75 inches

Pale yellow underparts with dark streaks

Crown and back streaked

Dark cheeks and malar streak

Dark wings with white edges

Rusty tail

Range in United States limited to southeastern Arizona

Similar species:

The Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher is easily separated from other North American flycatchers by its streaked plumage.

Tropical kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7? inches

Large head and bill

Range in United States mostly restricted to southeastern Arizona

Adult:

Dark, forked tail

Pale gray head with contrasting darker cheeks

Grayish-olive upperparts

Pale throat and darker breast

Bright yellow lower breast to undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Upperparts browner than adult

Pale edges to wings

Similar species:

The Tropical Kingbird is most similar to the Couch's Kingbird and can best be identified by its different calls. Western and Cassin's Kingbirds are similar but lack dark cheeks and have less-forked tails. Cassin's Kingbird has a darker breast. Western Kingbird has white outer tail feathers. Thick-billed Kingbird usually has whiter underparts and has a darker head. Brown-crested, Ash-throated and Dusky-capped Flycatchers are somewhat similar but have darker, browner crowns and unforked tails.

Couch's kingbird *Tyrannus couchii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7? inches

Large head and bill

Range in United States mostly restricted to southern Texas

Adult:

Dark, forked tail

Pale gray head with contrasting darker cheeks

Grayish-olive upperparts

Pale throat and darker breast

Bright yellow lower breast to undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Upperparts browner than adult

Pale edges to wings

Similar species:

The Tropical Kingbird is most similar to the Couch's Kingbird and can best be identified by its different calls. Western and Cassin's Kingbirds are similar but lack dark cheeks and have less-forked tails. Cassin's Kingbird has a darker breast. Western Kingbird has white outer tail feathers. Thick-billed Kingbird usually has whiter underparts and has a darker head. Brown-crested, Ash-throated and Great Crested Flycatchers are somewhat similar but have darker, browner crowns and unforked tails.

Cassin's kingbird *Tyrannus vociferans*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Large head

Often seen perched in exposed location where it flies out to catch insects and returns to the same perch

Adult:

Dark, unforked tail with buffy fringe

Gray head with slightly darker cheeks

Grayish-olive upperparts

Pale throat and contrasting darker breast

Yellow lower breast to undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Plumage somewhat duller than adult

Pale edges to wings

Similar species:

The Cassin's Kingbird is similar to several other species of kingbirds and can best be identified by its dark breast band. Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds have forked tails and darker cheeks. Western Kingbird has white outer tail feathers. Thick-billed Kingbird usually has whiter underparts and has a darker head. Brown-crested, Ash-throated and Great Crested Flycatchers are somewhat similar but have darker, browner crowns and brown and rusty tails.

Thick-billed kingbird *Tyrannus crassirostris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25 inches

Large head and bill

Range in United States mostly restricted to southeastern Arizona

Adult:

Dark, forked tail

Dark head with blackish mask

Dark brownish-olive upperparts

Whitish throat and breast

Yellow wash to belly and undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Upperparts browner than adult

Underparts brighter yellow than adult

Similar species:

The Thick-billed Kingbird is somewhat similar to other kingbirds but it has a darker head and a larger bill.

Western kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 7 inches
- Large head and bill
- Frequents open habitats
- Often seen perched on fences

Adult:

- Dark, unforked tail with white outer tail feathers
- Pale gray head with dark eyeline
- Grayish-olive upperparts
- Pale throat and upper breast
- Pale yellow lower breast to undertail coverts

Juvenile:

- Plumage somewhat duller than adult
- Pale edges to wings

Similar species:

The Western Kingbird is similar to several other species of kingbirds: Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds have forked tails and dark cheeks, Cassin's Kingbird has a darker breast, Western Kingbird has white outer tail feathers, Thick-billed Kingbird usually has whiter underparts and has a darker head. Brown-crested, Ash-throated and Great Crested Flycatchers are somewhat similar but have darker, browner crowns and brown and rusty tails (Western's is black and white).

Eastern kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.75 inches

Large head

Often feeds by flying out to catch insects and then returning to the same perch

Often perches in an exposed location, for example, the very top of a tree or on a fence

Frequents open habitats: agricultural areas and streams

Adult:

Black tail with white terminal band

Blackish upperparts

Whitish underparts

Red crown patch rarely visible

Juvenile:

Upperparts browner than adult

Similar species:

The Eastern Kingbird is easily told from other similar kingbirds by its white terminal tail band and black and white plumage. Waxwings have yellow terminal tail bands.

Gray kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches

Large head

Often feeds by flying out to catch insects and then returning to the same perch

Often perches in an exposed location: for example, a telephone line or a dead branch

Frequents mangroves in Florida

Adult:

Dark, forked tail

Dark cheeks

Gray upperparts

Whitish underparts

Reddish crown patch rarely visible

Juvenile:

Upperparts browner than adult

Similar species:

The Gray Kingbird is somewhat similar to the Eastern Kingbird but has a forked tail and lacks a white terminal tail band. The rare stray Loggerhead Kingbird is very similar but has a dark head and lacks the dark cheeks of the Gray Kingbird.

Scissor-tailed flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 13 inches

Frequents open habitats; often perches on fences

Adult:

Extremely long black tail with white outer tail feathers

Pale gray head and back

Whitish underparts

Pinkish flanks

Blackish wings

Juvenile:

Tail much shorter than adult

Plumage somewhat duller than adult

Similar species:

The adult Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, with its extremely long tail, is only likely to be confused with the stray Fork-tailed Flycatcher but this species has a dark cap. Juvenile Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and molting adults lack the extremely long tail and might be confused with kingbirds. The pale head and lack of yellow underparts should distinguish the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

Fork-tailed flycatcher *Tyrannus savana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches

Frequents open habitats; often perches on fences

Rare stray to eastern North America

Adult:

Extremely long black tail with white outer tail feathers

Black head

Gray back

Whitish underparts

Blackish wings

Juvenile:

Tail much shorter than adult

Plumage somewhat duller than adult

Similar species:

The adult Fork-tailed Flycatcher, with its extremely long tail, is only likely to be confused with the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher but this species lacks a dark cap.

Rose-throated becard *Pachyramphus aglaiae*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Frequents riparian habitats

Limited range in United States-southeastern Arizona and Rio Grande Valley in Texas

Male:

Rosy-red throat

Blackish head

Dark gray upperparts

Gray underparts

Female:

Dark top of head

Buff throat and side of neck

Brown upperparts

Buff underparts

Similar species:

The Rose-throated Becard is unlikely to be confused with any other species within its limited United States range.

Loggerhead shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Heavy, hooked bill

Black mask

Gray head and back

White underparts

Black wings with white wing patches

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Juveniles and immatures are duller with faint barring above and below

Similar species:

The Northern Shrike is very similar to the Loggerhead Shrike but is larger with a black mask that does not extend across the top of the bill, a paler gray overall color and faintly barred underparts. Immatures are browner than immature Loggerheads. Northern Mockingbirds have slimmer bills and lack a black mask.

Northern shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Heavy, hooked bill with a pale base to lower mandible

Black cheeks

Pale gray head and back

White underparts with faint gray barring

Black wings with white wing patches

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Juveniles and immatures are browner and duller

Similar species:

The Northern Shrike is very similar to the Loggerhead Shrike but is larger with a black mask that does not extend across the top of the bill, pale base to the lower mandible, a paler gray overall color and faintly barred underparts. Immatures are browner than immature Loggerheads. Northern Mockingbirds are similarly-sized and colored but have slimmer bills and lack a black mask.

White-eyed vireo *Vireo griseus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches

Thick bill with hooked upper mandible

Sexes similar

White eye

Yellow spectacles and dusky lores

Two bold whitish wing bars

Gray-olive head and olive back

White underparts with yellow flanks

Wings and tail dark; flight feathers edged yellow-olive, tertials edged white

Blue-gray legs

Juvenile differs from adult in having dark eyes and more yellow beneath.

Similar Species:

Juvenile White-eyed Vireo can resemble Yellow-throated Vireo but has white throat. Bell's Vireo has broken eye ring, lacks yellow spectacles, usually shows fainter wing bars and has a dark eye as an adult. Empidonax flycatchers can have an olive back, wing bars, and white underparts with yellow flanks, but lack spectacles and have dark eyes.

Bell's vireo *Vireo bellii*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 4.25 inches
- Faint white supercilium
- Dark eyeline and eye
- White border beneath eye (lower half of eye ring)
- Faint white wing bars
- Grayish upperparts
- Whitish underparts with grayish wash to breast
- Thick bill with hooked upper mandible
- Sexes similar
- Juveniles similar to adults
- Eastern birds are more olive than western birds

Similar Species:

The small Bell's Vireo is dull even by vireo standards. It is best told from other vireos by its facial pattern. The white eye ring of the Bell's Vireo is broken in front of and behind the eye. The Hutton's Vireo's eye ring is thickest behind the eye and is broken at the top. The Gray Vireo has a complete eye ring. The White-eyed Vireo has yellow lores and white eyes (adults). The Warbling Vireo is larger and has a bolder supercilium that extends further behind the eye. Warblers have thinner, unhooked bills.

Black-capped vireo *Vireo atricapillus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4 inches

White spectacles

Red eye

Black cap (somewhat paler in females and immatures)

Yellow wing bars

White underparts with yellowish flanks

Olive upperparts

Thick bill with hooked upper mandible

Sexes similar

Juveniles similar to adults

Restricted range in Texas and Oklahoma

Similar species:

The bold white spectacles against the contrasting black cap are diagnostic. Solitary Vireo has a gray head. Yellow-throated and White-eyed Vireos have yellow spectacles and much paler heads.

Gray vireo *Vireo vicinior*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches

White eye ring

Pale gray upperparts

Faint white wing bars

Whitish underparts with grayish wash to breast and flanks

Thick bill with hooked upper mandible

Sexes similar

Juveniles similar to adults

Similar Species:

The Solitary Vireo has bold white spectacles and more conspicuous wing bars than the Gray Vireo. The Bell's Vireo has a dark eyeline and lacks a complete eye ring. The Hutton's Vireo also lacks a complete eye ring. Both Hutton's and Bell's Vireos are more olive than the Gray Vireo.

Yellow-throated vireo *Vireo flavifrons*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 5 inches
- Thick bill with hooked upper mandible
- Dark eye
- Bold yellow spectacles
- Bright yellow throat and upper breast
- Olive head and back
- White belly and undertail coverts
- Gray rump
- Wings and tail dark
- Blue-gray legs
- Two bold white wing bars
- Sexes similar
- Juvenile similar to adult

Similar Species:

No other vireo combines white wing bars, yellow throat and yellow spectacles. Juvenile White-eyed Vireo is similar but does not have a yellow throat. Pine Warbler has similar plumage, but lacks spectacles, and has a thinner bill, faintly streaked sides, and white tail spots.

Plumbeous vireo *Vireo plumbeus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75? inches

White spectacles

Dark eye

White wing bars

Thick bill with hooked upper mandible

Gray head not contrasting with gray back

Grayish flanks contrasting with whitish underparts

Sexes similar

Juveniles similar to adults

Formerly conspecific with Cassin's and Blue-headed Vireo

Similar species:

The bold white spectacles of the Plumbeous Vireo are also shared by the Blue-headed and Cassin's Vireos but they have more contrast between the gray head and the more olive back and olive or yellowish flanks. Black-capped Vireo also has white spectacles but it has a black, not gray, head. Yellow-throated and White-eyed Vireos have yellow spectacles. The Gray Vireo is similar but it lacks spectacles and has faint wing bars.

Cassin's vireo *Vireo cassinii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75? inches

White spectacles

Dark eye

White wing bars

Dull gray head contrasting slightly with olive back

Whitish underparts with dull olive flanks

Thick bill with hooked upper mandible

Sexes similar

Juveniles similar to adults

Formerly conspecific with Blue-headed and Plumbeous Vireos

Similar species:

The bold white spectacles of the Cassin's Vireo are shared by the Blue-headed and Cassin's Vireos. Blue-headed Vireo has brighter yellow flanks and more contrast between the head and back. Plumbeous Vireo is duller with little contrast between the head and the back and has grayer flanks. Black-capped Vireo also has white spectacles but it has a black, not gray, head. Yellow-throated and White-eyed Vireos have yellow spectacles. The Gray Vireo lacks spectacles and has faint wing bars.

Blue-headed vireo *Vireo solitarius*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75? inches

White spectacles

Dark eye

White wing bars

Gray head contrasting with olive back

White throat, breast, and undertail coverts

Yellowish flanks

Thick bill with hooked upper mandible

Sexes similar

Juveniles similar to adults

Formerly conspecific with Cassin's and Plumbeous Vireos

Similar species:

The bold white spectacles of the Blue-headed Vireo are a good field mark. Black-capped Vireo also has white spectacles but it has a black, not gray, head. Yellow-throated and White-eyed Vireos have yellow spectacles. Plumbeous and Cassin's Vireos are duller without bright yellow flanks and have less contrast between the head and back. The Gray Vireo lacks spectacles and has faint wing bars.

Hutton's vireo *Vireo huttoni*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 4 inches
- Incomplete white eye ring-broken at top
- Dark eye
- White wing bars
- Olive-gray upperparts
- Olive-gray wash to breast, whiter on belly
- Thick bill with hooked upper mandible
- Sexes similar
- Juveniles similar to adults
- Southwest birds are grayer than coastal birds

Similar Species:

The nondescript Hutton's Vireo can be told from other vireos and warblers by its incomplete white eye ring. It is remarkably similar in plumage to the Ruby-crowned Kinglet but the kinglet is smaller with a much thinner bill.

Warbling vireo *Vireo gilvus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Thick bill with hooked upper mandible

Sexes similar

Brown eye

White supercilium

Pale lores

Gray or olive-gray head, back, wings, and tail

White underparts

No wing bars

May have pale yellow wash on belly or flanks

Blue-gray legs

Juvenile may have yellowish flanks or belly in fall and a faint buff wing bar

Similar Species:

The Red-eyed Vireo complex (Red-eyed, Black-whiskered, Yellow-green) has an olive-green back color and a contrasting gray crown, a bold white supercilium offset by black stripes above and below, and red eyes as adults. Philadelphia Vireo has dark lores and pale yellow throat and breast. All other vireos have wing bars. Tennessee Warbler has similar, though more olive, plumage, but is smaller and has a thin, pointed bill.

Philadelphia vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Thick bill with hooked upper mandible

Sexes similar

Dark eye

Bold white supercilium offset by dark eyeline but without dark stripe above

Dark lores

Olive upperparts

Yellow underparts, most concentrated on breast

No wing bars

Blue-gray legs

Similar Species:

Members of the Red-eyed Vireo complex have bolder supercilia that are bordered above (and below) by black stripes, red eyes as adults, and mostly white underparts. Warbling Vireo is very similar, especially fall immatures which can have quite yellow underparts. Note the pale lores of Warbling Vireo and the tendency for any yellow to be concentrated on the belly and flanks rather than the breast. Tennessee Warbler is quite similar but has a thinner pointed bill. All other vireos have wing bars.

Red-eyed vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Thick bill with hooked upper mandible

Sexes similar

Red eye

White supercilium bordered above by a dark line and below by a dark eye line

Gray crown contrasts with olive-green back and upper wings

No wing bars

White underparts

Yellowish cast to flanks and undertail coverts in fresh plumage

Blue-gray legs

Juvenile has brown eye and yellower underparts than adult

Similar species:

Warbling Vireo has a grayer back, no black borders to the white supercilium, and a dark eye. Philadelphia Vireo has yellower underparts, a less distinct supercilium and a dark eye. In Florida the Black-whiskered Vireo can be distinguished from the Red-eyed by its black malar streak. In South Texas the rare Yellow-green Vireo is much yellower below and has much paler black borders to the supercilium than the Red-eyed. All other vireos have wing bars.

Black-whiskered vireo *Vireo altiloquus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Thick bill with hooked upper mandible

Sexes similar

Red eye

White supercilium bordered above by a dark line and below by a dark eye line

Dark malar streak

Gray crown contrasts with olive-green back and upper wings

No wing bars

White underparts

Yellowish cast to flanks and undertail coverts in fresh plumage

Blue-gray legs

Range mostly restricted to Florida coasts

Juvenile has brown eye and yellower underparts than adult

Similar species:

The Black-whiskered Vireo is most similar to the Red-eyed Vireo and can be distinguished by its black malar streak. Other vireos also lack the malar streak and have different face patterns.

Gray jay *Perisoreus canadensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Short, sturdy, dark bill

White forehead, face and underparts

Dark cap and nape (variable amounts of dark depending on range)

Gray upperparts

Juveniles very dark

Similar species:

None

Steller's jay *Cyanocitta stelleri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

Black sturdy bill

Black crest and head

Forehead and throat may have some white flecks

Dark blue body

Wings and tail have dark bars

Dark legs

Similar species:

Because of its large size, blue coloration and crest the Steller's Jay is quite distinctive. Steller's Jay has darker underparts than the similarly crested Blue Jay. Other jays lack a crest and have different markings.

Blue jay *Cyanocitta cristata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Black sturdy bill

Blue crest and upperparts

Black eyeline and breastband

Grayish-white throat and underparts

Bright blue wings with black bars and white patches

Long blue tail with black bars and white corners

Dark legs

Migrates during the day in small flocks

Similar species:

Because of its large size, blue coloration and crest the Blue Jay is quite distinctive. Steller's Jay has dark underparts. Other jays lack a crest and have different markings.

Green jay *Cyanocorax yncas*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9.75 inches

Sturdy, dark bill

Blue nape

Black throat

Black and blue markings around eye

Green back and wings

Yellow underparts

Long, blue-green tail with yellow outer tail feathers

United States range restricted to southern Texas

Similar species:

None

Brown jay *Cyanocorax morio*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Sturdy, dark bill (yellow in juveniles)

Dark brown head and upperparts

Whitish belly and undertail coverts

Long, dark tail

United States range restricted to southern Texas

Similar species:

None

Florida scrub-jay *Aphelocoma coerulescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10? inches

Black sturdy bill

Grayish supercilium and dark eyeline

Blue head, rump, wings and tail

Gray-brown back

Grayish white throat with diffuse streaking and dark lower border

Gray-brown underparts

Dark legs

Range restricted to central Florida

Similar species:

The only other large, long-tailed, blue bird within the range of the Florida Scrub-Jay is the Blue Jay. The Blue Jay has a crest and white patches in the wings and tail.

Island scrub-jay *Aphelocoma insularis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10? inches

Larger than Western Scrub-Jay

Plumage similar to coastal Western Scrub-Jay

Range restricted to Santa Cruz Island, California

Similar species:

There is no other large, long-tailed, blue bird within the range of the Island Scrub-Jay.

Western scrub-jay *Aphelocoma californica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10? inches

Sturdy, dark bill

Pale supercilium with darker cheeks

Blue head, rump, wings and tail

Gray-brown back

Gray or white throat with dark lower border

Grayish underparts

Birds from Washington to California have brighter blue upperparts and whiter throats than birds from the interior portion of the range

Similar species:

The Mexican Jay, an inhabitant of southeastern Arizona, is similar to the Western Scrub-Jay but has uniform underparts lacking the white throat and dark collar and more evenly colored upperparts. Pinyon Jay has blue underparts and a shorter tail.

Mexican jay *Aphelocoma ultramarina*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10.75 inches

Sturdy, dark bill

Grayish-blue upperparts

Grayish-white underparts

Long tail

United States range restricted to southeastern Arizona

Similar species:

The Mexican Jay, an inhabitant of southeastern Arizona, is similar to the Western Scrub-Jay but has uniform underparts lacking the white throat and dark collar and more evenly colored upperparts.

Pinyon jay *Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches

Long, pointed bill

Grayish-blue plumage

Short tail

Similar species:

The Pinyon Jay has a shorter tail than the other jays and darker underparts

Clark's nutcracker *Nucifraga columbiana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 11 inches

Long, pointed bill

Pale gray plumage

White around base of bill and undertail coverts

Black wings with white patch on secondaries

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Similar species:

None

Black-billed magpie *Pica hudsonia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 18 inches

Large, striking bird

Black sturdy bill

Long, iridescent tail

Black head, breast, back, rump and undertail coverts

White belly

Iridescent wings with white patches in flight

Dark legs

Similar species:

The Black-billed Magpie can be told from the very similar Yellow-billed Magpie by its black bill.

Yellow-billed magpie *Pica nuttalli*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches

Large, striking bird

Yellow sturdy bill

Long, iridescent tail

Black head, breast, back, rump and undertail coverts

White belly

Iridescent wings with white patches in flight

Dark legs

Similar species:

The Yellow-billed Magpie can be told from the very similar Black-billed Magpie by its yellow bill.

American crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17 inches

Entirely black plumage

Squared-off tail

Very common in urban and agricultural areas

Similar species:

Fish Crow very similar but has different call. Northwestern Crow also very similar but has different range. Ravens are similar but larger with wedge-shaped tails and different calls.

Northwestern crow *Corvus caurinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 14.5 inches

Entirely black plumage

Squared-off tail

Range restricted to coastal areas from Alaska to Washington

Similar species:

American Crow is very similar but has different range. Common Raven is larger with wedge-shaped tail and different call.

Fish crow *Corvus ossifragus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 15 inches

Entirely black plumage

Squared-off tail

Similar species:

American Crow is very similar but has different call. Common Raven is larger with wedge-shaped tail and different call.

Chihuahuan raven *Corvus cryptoleucus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 17.5 inches

Entirely black plumage

Larger than crows

Wedge-shaped tail

Similar species:

Crows are smaller, have squared-off tails and different calls. Common Raven similar but larger with somewhat different calls and occupies less arid habitats.

Common raven *Corvus corax*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 21 inches
- Entirely black plumage
- Larger than crows
- Wedge-shaped tail
- Relatively short legs

Similar species:

Crows are smaller, have squared-off tails and different calls. Chihuahuan Raven similar but smaller with somewhat different calls and occupies more arid habitats.

Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches

Thin bill

White supercilium

Brown upperparts

Streaked crown and back

Buff breast with dark streaks

White belly and undertail coverts

White outer tail feathers

White trailing edge to wing

Pink legs

North American range limited to Vancouver Island, British Columbia-stray elsewhere

Inhabits fields

Similar species:

The Sky Lark can be told from sparrows by its thin bill and from pipits by its streaked crown and back and white trailing edge to the wing.

Horned lark *Eremophila alpestris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches

Thin bill

Black mask, horns and breastband

White or yellow supercilium

White or yellow throat

Gray-brown upperparts

Pale underparts

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Dark legs

Juvenile is duller, lacks horns

Inhabits open areas with short or sparse vegetation

Often found in large flocks

Similar species:

The face pattern of the Horned Lark is quite different from other field-loving species.

Purple martin *Progne subis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Tiny bill

Largest swallow

Most often seen flying

Will nest communally at martin houses in residential and agricultural areas

Adult male:

Dark purple plumage, usually appears black

Forked tail

Immature males similar to female but may be splotched with dark purple

Adult female:

Dark gray upperparts with some purple coloration

Whitish underparts with gray breast band and throat with some speckling on sides and belly

Forked tail

Immature plumages similar to female

Similar species:

The male Purple Martin is easily told from other swallows by its entirely dark plumage. It is vaguely similar to the starling but has a smaller bill, longer wings and a darker plumage. Female Purple Martins are similar to Bank and Northern Rough-winged Swallows but are larger, and flap more slowly. At close range, the darker upperparts of the martin are evident.

Tree swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Tiny bill

Iridescent blue-green upperparts

White underparts

Forked tail

Female duller than male

Juvenile dull brown above and may have hint of a gray breast band

Most often seen flying

Nests in cavities near water

Often found in large flocks

Similar species:

The Tree Swallow is most similar to the Violet-green Swallow. The Violet-green Swallow has white patches that extend further onto the sides of the rump, a white area that extends behind and over the eye and greener upperparts. Bank and Northern Rough-winged Swallows look similar, especially in Fall. Bank Swallow is smaller, this feature is especially noticeable as mixed flocks of swallows often sit on telephone wires. Bank has a dark breast band that is lacking or indistinct in the Tree. From above, Bank Swallow has a paler rump that contrasts with the darker back and tail where the Tree Swallow is uniformly-colored. Northern Rough-winged Swallow has a dusky throat and warmer brown upperparts than the Tree Swallow. Swallows often call in flight and these calls are excellent clues to identification.

Violet-green swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Tiny bill

Green upperparts

White underparts

White patches on side of rump

White area extends behind and over eye (male)

Forked tail

Female duller than male

Juvenile dull brown above and may have hint of a gray breast band

Most often seen flying

Nests in cavities near water

Similar species:

The Tree Swallow is most similar to the Violet-green Swallow. The Violet-green Swallow has white patches that extend further onto the sides of the rump, a white area that extends behind and over the eye and greener upperparts.

Northern rough-winged swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Tiny bill

Warm brown upperparts

White underparts with dusky throat and breast

Forked tail

Most often seen flying

Nests in holes (burrows, crevices) near water

Similar species:

The Northern Rough-winged Swallow is similar to Bank and immature Tree Swallow but has warmer brown upperparts and a dusky throat and breast. It lacks the breast band of the Bank Swallow and is larger.

Bank swallow *Riparia riparia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Tiny bill

Smallest swallow

Dark brown upperparts

White underparts with dark breast band

Rump paler than back and tail

Forked tail

Most often seen flying

Nests in cavities near water

Similar species:

The Bank Swallow is most similar to Northern Rough-winged and immature Tree Swallow. When perched, as mixed flocks of swallows often do on telephone wires, the Bank Swallow is obviously smaller than the other species. In flight, the Bank Swallow has a dark breast band from below and a paler rump, contrasting with darker back and tail, from above.

Cliff swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Tiny bill

Pale orange rump and forehead (dark in some southwestern birds)

Blackish cap, throat and upperparts

Side of neck brown

Tip of tail squared

Juveniles similar to adults but duller

Most often seen flying

Will nest communally in mud nests under bridges, in barns and caves, etc

Similar species:

The Cliff Swallow can be told from all swallows except the Cave Swallow by its pale rump. Cave Swallow has a darker forehead and a paler throat than the Cliff Swallow. When viewed from below, the Cliff Swallow can be told from other swallows by its squared tail and dark throat.

Cave swallow *Petrochelidon fulva*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Tiny bill

Pale orange rump and throat

Blackish cap and upperparts

Tip of tail squared

Most often seen flying

Will nest communally in mud nests under bridges, in caves, etc

Similar species:

The Cave Swallow can be told from all swallows except the Cliff Swallow by its pale rump. Cave Swallow has a darker forehead and a paler throat than the Cliff Swallow. The Cave Swallow's tail is more squared at the tip than most other swallows.

Barn swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches

Tiny bill

Dark orange forehead and throat

Pale orange underparts

Dark, iridescent upperparts

Long, deeply forked tail

Juvenile similar to adult but paler underneath with a shorter tail

Most often seen flying

Will nest communally in mud nests under bridges, in barns and caves, etc

Similar species:

The Barn Swallow can be told from all swallows by its deeply forked tail.

Carolina chickadee *Poecile carolinensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Short bill

Black crown and throat

White face

Pale gray upperparts

Gray edges to wing coverts

Grayish-white underparts

Rusty flanks

Sexes similar

Often found in small flocks

Similar species:

The Black-capped Chickadee is very similar to the Carolina Chickadee and where their ranges overlap they can be difficult to separate. In fact, they have trouble telling themselves apart and hybrids occur. The most obvious difference between them is their songs. Black-capped sings a two note song while Carolina sings a four note song. Hybrids sing a three note song. Outside of the breeding season, when chickadees don't sing much, the Black-capped is slightly larger, has more white edging in the wing and has slower, lower-pitched calls.

Black-capped chickadee *Poecile atricapilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Short bill

Black crown and throat

White face

Pale gray upperparts

White edges to wing coverts

Grayish-white underparts

Rusty flanks

Sexes similar

Often found in small flocks

Similar species:

The Black-capped Chickadee is very similar to the Carolina Chickadee and where their ranges overlap they can be difficult to separate. In fact, they have trouble telling themselves apart and hybrids occur. The most obvious difference between them is their songs. Black-capped sings a two note song while Carolina sings a four note song. Hybrids sing a three note song. Outside of the breeding season, when chickadees don't sing much, the Black-capped is slightly larger, has more white edging in the wing and has slower, lower-pitched calls. Boreal and Chestnut-backed Chickadees have more brown in their plumages than the Black-capped.

Mountain chickadee *Poecile gambeli*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Short bill

Black crown and throat

White supercilium

White face

Gray upperparts

Grayish-white underparts

Gray flanks

Sexes similar

Often found in small flocks

Similar species:

Other chickadees lack a white supercilium. Bridled Titmouse has a crest.

Mexican chickadee *Poecile sclateri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Short bill

Black crown and throat

White face

Gray upperparts

Grayish-white underparts

Gray flanks

Sexes similar

Often found in small flocks

United States range restricted to southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico

Similar species:

The Mexican Chickadee is similar to the Mountain Chickadee but lacks a white supercilium. Other chickadees lack the gray flanks of the Mexican Chickadee.

Chestnut-backed chickadee *Poecile rufescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Short bill

Dark brown crown

White face

Black throat

Rufous back and sides

Gray wings and tail

White underparts

Sexes similar

Similar species:

Boreal Chickadee has less white in the face than the Chestnut-backed Chickadee and has duller brown flanks and back. Other chickadees lack rufous backs and flanks.

Boreal chickadee *Poecile hudsonica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Short bill

Gray-brown crown and back

Face white near bill but mostly gray

Black throat

Gray wings and tail

Brown flanks

White belly

Sexes similar

Similar species:

Boreal Chickadee has less white in the face than the Siberian Tit and Chestnut-backed Chickadee. Chestnut-backed Chickadee also has more rufous flanks and back. Black-capped chickadee lacks brown in its plumage.

Gray-headed Chickadee *Poecile cincta*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Short bill

Gray-brown crown and upperparts

White face

Black throat

Grayish-white underparts

Sexes similar

North American range restricted to central Alaska and far northwestern Canada

Similar species:

Boreal Chickadee has less white in the face than the Siberian Tit.

Bridled titmouse *Baeolophus wollweberi*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Short bill

Gray crest with black border

Black eyeline and throat

Pale gray upperparts

Grayish-white underparts

Sexes similar

Often found in small flocks

United States range restricted to parts of Arizona and New Mexico

Similar species:

The Bridled Titmouse can be told from the similarly-shaped Plain Titmouse by its black and white face pattern. Mexican and Mountain Chickadees lack the crest of the Bridled titmouse.

Oak titmouse *Baeolophus inornatus*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 5? inches
- Short bill
- Gray crest
- Gray-brown upperparts
- Grayish-white underparts
- Sexes similar
- Often found in small flocks

Similar species:

None within its range.

Juniper titmouse *Baeolophus ridgwayi*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5? inches

Short bill

Gray crest

Dull gray upperparts

Grayish-white underparts

Sexes similar

Often found in small flocks

Formerly conspecific with Oak Titmouse

Similar species:

Bridled Titmouse has a black and white face pattern.

Tufted titmouse *Baeolophus bicolor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5-5.5 inches

Short bill

Gray crest

Dark forehead

Pale gray upperparts

White underparts

Rusty flanks

Birds from central and southern Texas (formerly a separate species, Black-crested Titmouse) have black crests and pale foreheads

Sexes similar

Often found in small flocks

Similar species:

The Tufted Titmouse is similar to the Plain Titmouse but has rusty flanks and a black forehead (or crest).

Verdin *Auriparus flaviceps*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.5 inches

Short, thin bill

Yellow face

Black lores

Pale gray upperparts

Whitish underparts

Brownish shoulders

Sexes similar

Similar species:

The yellow face is the best field mark to identify this bird.

Bushtit *Psaltriparus minimus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.5 inches

Short bill

Pale gray upperparts

Whitish underparts

Long gray tail

Sexes similar

Some variation in plumage-coastal birds have brownish crowns, interior birds have brownish cheeks, some birds from near Mexico have black cheeks

Usually found in flocks

Similar species:

Long tail, short bill and dull plumage make the bushtit unlikely to be confused with any other bird.

Red-breasted nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4 inches

Straight gray bill

Black crown and eyeline with white supercilium

White lower face and throat

Blue-gray upperparts

Reddish underparts

Short tail

Sexes similar but female duller

Feeds by hopping along tree trunks and branches often hanging upside down

Most often found in pine trees

Similar species:

Because of its unique feeding strategy, the Red-breasted Nuthatch is most likely to be confused with other nuthatches. White-breasted Nuthatch lacks a black eyeline and has mostly white underparts. Brown-headed and Pygmy Nuthatches have brown caps, white patches on the nape and lack the eyelines.

White-breasted nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Straight gray bill

Black crown and nape

White face and underparts

Blue-gray upperparts

Rusty undertail coverts

Short tail

Sexes similar but female duller

Feeds by hopping along tree trunks and branches often hanging upside down

Similar species:

Because of its unique feeding strategy, the White-breasted Nuthatch is most likely to be confused with other nuthatches. Red-breasted Nuthatch has a black eyeline and reddish underparts. Brown-headed and Pygmy Nuthatches have brown caps and a white patch on the nape. Red-breasted, Pygmy and Brown-headed Nuthatches are mostly found in pines while the White-breasted prefers deciduous trees.

Pygmy nuthatch *Sitta pygmaea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.5 inches

Straight thin bill

Gray-brown crown

White patch on nape

White lower face, throat and underparts

Blue-gray upperparts

Short tail

Sexes similar

Feeds by hopping along tree trunks and branches often hanging upside down

Most often found in pine trees

Range restricted to western United States

Similar species:

Because of its unique feeding strategy, the Pygmy Nuthatch is most likely to be confused with other nuthatches. Both White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches have black, not brown, crowns and lack the pale spot on the nape. Brown-headed Nuthatch is very similar but their ranges do not overlap.

Brown-headed nuthatch *Sitta pusilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.5 inches

Straight thin bill

Brown crown

White patch on nape

White lower face, throat and underparts

Blue-gray upperparts

Short tail

Sexes similar

Feeds by hopping along tree trunks and branches often hanging upside down

Most often found in pine trees

Range restricted to southeastern United States

Similar species:

Because of its unique feeding strategy, the Brown-headed Nuthatch is most likely to be confused with other nuthatches. Both White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches have black, not brown, crowns and lack the pale spot on the nape. Pygmy Nuthatch is very similar but their ranges do not overlap.

Brown creeper *Certhia americana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Small size

Thin, decurved bill

Bold white supercilium

Brown upperparts with white spots

Rusty rump

White underparts

Fairly long tail

Sexes similar

Feeds by creeping along tree trunks and branches

Similar species:

The Brown Creeper is the only small brown bird that forages in such a unique manner-it creeps along trunks and branches like a woodpecker. It blends in quite well and can be difficult to see.

Cactus wren *Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches

Long, slightly decurved bill

Bold white supercilium contrasting with dark crown and eyeline

White throat

Upper breast densely spotted with black

Underparts white becoming buffy toward tail and spotted

Upperparts grayish-brown with black and white streaks and spots

Long tail barred with black and white

Dark legs

Sexes similar

Similar species:

Thrashers are somewhat similar but are larger and lack the white supercilium and dense spotting on the breast.

Rock wren *Salpinctes obsoletus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Thin, slightly decurved bill

Pale gray supercilium

Underparts pale gray becoming buffy toward tail

Upperparts gray with minute black and white spots

Pale brown rump

Long, barred tail with buffy outer tips

Dark legs

Sexes similar

Similar species:

Canyon Wren is similar to the Rock Wren but has a white throat and upper breast contrasting with its darker underparts and a longer bill. Bewick's Wren has a bolder supercilium and lacks contrast between the back and rump.

Canyon wren *Catherpes mexicanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Very long, thin bill

Dark brown crown and side of face

White throat, upper breast, and lower face

Lower breast, belly and undertail coverts rusty

Upperparts dark brown with small black spots

Long, brown tail with thin black bars

Dark legs

Sexes similar

Similar species:

Canyon Wren is similar to the Rock Wren but has a white throat and upper breast contrasting with its darker underparts and a longer bill.

Carolina wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches
Long, thin, slightly decurved bill
Bold white supercilium
Rusty upperparts
White throat and buffy underparts
Wings and tail barred with black
Thin white wing bars
Long tail frequently held upright
Pink legs
Sexes similar
Usually very vocal and loud

Similar species:

The Carolina Wren is similar to the Bewick's and Marsh Wrens but has buffy, not white, underparts and rustier upperparts. House Wren has a less distinct supercilium, less rusty upperparts and barring on the belly and undertail coverts. Winter Wren is smaller, darker, has a shorter tail and less distinct supercilium.

Bewick's wren *Thryomanes bewickii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Long, thin, slightly decurved bill

Bold white supercilium

Gray-brown upperparts (brownier in eastern United States birds)

Grayish-white underparts

Wings and tail barred with black

Long tail has white corners and is frequently held upright

Dark legs

Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Bewick's Wren can be distinguished from House and Rock Wrens by its bold white supercilium. Carolina Wren is rustier above and buffier below. Marsh Wren has a streaked back.

House wren *Troglodytes aedon*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Short, thin bill

Indistinct supercilium

Eye ring

Gray-brown upperparts (brownier in eastern United States birds)

Pale gray underparts with dark barring on belly and undertail coverts

Wings and tail barred with black

Tail frequently held upright

Pink legs

Sexes similar

Similar species:

Other wrens with indistinct superciliums are Winter, Sedge and Rock Wrens. Winter Wren is more reddish-brown above, darker below and has a shorter tail. Sedge Wren is buffier on the breast and is streaked with white on the crown and back. Rock Wren is larger with a contrast between the gray back and brown rump and has buffy tips to the tail.

Winter wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.25 inches

Short, thin bill

Indistinct supercilium

Reddish-brown upperparts (more reddish in eastern United States birds)

Buff breast with dark barring on belly and undertail coverts

Wings and tail barred with black

Very short tail frequently held upright

Pink legs

Sexes similar

Frequently found very near the ground in brush piles, root tangles and along stream banks

Similar species:

Other wrens with indistinct superciliums are House, Sedge and Rock Wrens. Winter Wren is more reddish-brown above, darker below and has a shorter tail. Sedge Wren is streaked with white on the crown and back. Rock Wren is larger with a contrast between the gray back and brown rump and has buffy tips to the tail.

Sedge wren *Cistothorus platensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.75 inches

Short, thin bill

Indistinct supercilium

Brown upperparts with pale streaks on back and crown

Buffy breast and flanks

Wings and tail barred with black

Short tail frequently held upright

Sexes similar

Found in wet fields and marshes

Similar species:

Other wrens with indistinct superciliums are House, Winter and Rock Wrens. Winter Wren is more reddish-brown above, darker below and has a shorter tail. House Wren lacks white streaking on the crown and back and is less buffy on the underparts. Rock Wren is larger with a contrast between the gray back and brown rump and has buffy tips to the tail.

Marsh wren *Cistothorus palustris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4 inches

Short, thin bill

Bold white supercilium

Brown upperparts

Unstreaked crown

Black back with white streaks

White throat and breast

Buffy belly and flanks

Wings and tail barred with black

Tail frequently held upright

Sexes similar

Found in marshes with tall, grassy vegetation

Similar species:

Bewick's Wren is similar but has unstreaked back. Sedge Wren has less distinct supercilium and streaked crown.

American dipper *Cinclus mexicanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Slender bill

Slate-gray body with browner head

Frequently bobs very short tail

Pale legs

Sexes similar

Juvenile paler

Found along streams in mountains-often feeds under water

Similar species:

The American Dipper is unlikely to be confused with any other species

Red-whiskered bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 7 inches
- Slender bill
- Red ear patch and undertail coverts
- Black head with crest
- Dark upperparts
- White underparts
- Long tail
- Sexes similar
- Introduced to southern Florida

Similar species:

The crest, black and white plumage and red undertail coverts are quite distinctive.

Golden-crowned kinglet *Regulus satrapa*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.5 inches

Very small, active bird that often flicks its wings

Thin bill

Yellow crown surrounded by black

White supercilium

Black eyeline and whisker

Grayish-olive upperparts

Whitish underparts

White wing bars

Yellow edges to flight feathers and tail

Male has orange patch in center of yellow crown

Similar species:

The Golden-crowned Kinglet is similar in size to the Ruby-crowned Kinglet but has a white supercilium and yellow crown. Warblers are larger and lack the distinctive face pattern.

Ruby-crowned kinglet *Regulus calendula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.75 inches

Very small, active bird that often flicks its wings

Thin bill

Broken eye ring

Olive upperparts

Pale olive underparts

White wing bars

Yellow edges to flight feathers and tail

Male has red patch in center of crown (not always visible)

Similar species:

The Hutton's Vireo is very similar in plumage but has a thicker bill. The Golden-crowned Kinglet is similar in size to the Ruby-crowned Kinglet but has a white supercilium and yellow crown. Warblers are larger, don't flick their wings and lack the broken eye ring.

Arctic warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Thin bill

Pale supercilium

Dark eyeline

Pale grayish-olive upperparts

Whitish underparts

Sexes similar

United States range restricted to Alaska

Similar species:

The Arctic Warbler has a more obvious supercilium than the Orange-crowned Warbler.

Blue-gray gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4 inches

Very small, active bird

Thin bill

White eye ring

Blue-gray upperparts

White underparts

Long, black tail with white outer tail feathers-mostly white when viewed from below

Male has black supercilium in breeding season

Similar species:

The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher is so small but long-tailed that it is only likely to be confused with other gnatcatchers. Male Black-tailed, California, and Black-capped Gnatcatchers have variable amounts of black (depending on season and age) in the crown while Blue-gray Gnatcatchers lack any black in the crown. Female gnatcatchers, other than the Blue-gray, have their upperparts tinged with brown. Black-tailed and California Gnatcatchers have blacker tails when viewed from below and typically have grayer underparts.

California gnatcatcher *Polioptila californica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4? inches

Very small, active bird

Thin bill

White eye ring

Blue-gray upperparts

Gray underparts

Brownish wash to wings

Long, black tail with white outer tail feathers-mostly black when viewed from below

Male has black cap

United States range restricted to southwestern California

Similar species:

The California Gnatcatcher is so small but long-tailed that it is only likely to be confused with other gnatcatchers. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher has a whiter tail when viewed from below and lacks the brownish wash to the wings. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers lack the black cap of the male California Gnatcatcher. California Gnatcatchers are grayer below, have less white in the tail and have a different call than the formerly conspecific Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. The very local (Southeast Arizona) Black-capped Gnatcatcher has more white in the tail when viewed from below, a longer bill and males have a downward black projection at the rear of the cap.

Black-tailed gnatcatcher *Polioptila melanura*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4? inches

Very small, active bird

Thin bill

White eye ring

Blue-gray upperparts

Whitish underparts

Brownish wash to wings

Long, black tail with white outer tail feathers-mostly black when viewed from below

Male has black cap

Similar species:

The Black-tailed Gnatcatcher is so small but long-tailed that it is only likely to be confused with other gnatcatchers. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher has a whiter tail when viewed from below and lacks the brownish wash to the wings. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers lack the black cap of the male Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. California Gnatcatchers are grayer below, have less white in the tail and have a different call. The very local (Southeast Arizona) Black-capped Gnatcatcher has more white in the tail when viewed from below, a longer bill and males have a downward black projection at the rear of the cap.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Small, thin-billed bird

White supercilium

Dark legs

North American range restricted to northern Alaska

Adult male:

Blue throat with brown patch in center

Black and brown breast bands

Gray-brown upperparts

White underparts

Rusty patches in tail

Female and immature:

Plumage similar to adult male except lacking blue and brown areas on throat

White throat

Black breast band

Similar species:

The male Bluethroat is instantly identifiable. Females and immatures can be identified by their white throats, dark breast bands and rust patches in the tail.

Northern wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Thin bill

White supercilium

Dark legs

White rump and base of tail

Tip of tail black

Wings black

Forages actively on the ground in open habitats

North American range restricted to parts of Alaska and Yukon-casual stray to rest of United States and Canada

Adult male:

Black mask

Variably buffy underparts

Gray upperparts

Female and immature:

Plumage similar to adult male but duller, browner and lacks black mask

Similar species:

The Northern Wheatear is fairly easy to identify with its thin bill, active habits and diagnostic rump and tail pattern.

Eastern bluebird *Sialia sialis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Thin bill

Most often seen in open habitats: agricultural areas, wood edges, et al

Southwestern United States birds are paler

Adult male:

Bright blue upperparts

Orange-red throat, breast and sides

White belly and undertail coverts

Female:

Blue wings and tail-duller than male

Gray crown and back

White eye ring

Brownish throat, breast and sides

White belly and undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Blue wings and tail-duller than male

Gray crown and back

White eye ring

Spotted underparts

Similar species:

The Eastern Bluebird is most likely to be confused with other bluebirds. Male Western Bluebirds have blue throats while male Easterns have orange-red ones. Male Mountain Bluebirds lack any reddish coloration on their underparts. Females are more difficult to separate. Both Western and Mountain Bluebirds have gray throats and gray bellies while the Eastern Bluebird has a brownish throat and white belly.

Western bluebird *Sialia mexicana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Thin bill

Most often seen in open habitats: agricultural areas, wood edges, et al

Adult male:

Bright blue upperparts and throat

Brownish patch on back

Orange-red breast and sides

Gray belly and undertail coverts

Adult female:

Blue wings and tail-duller than male

Gray crown and back

Eye ring

Gray throat

Brownish wash to breast and sides

Gray belly and undertail coverts

Juvenile:

Blue wings and tail-duller than male

White eye ring

Spotted underparts

Similar species:

The Western Bluebird is most likely to be confused with other bluebirds. Male Western Bluebirds have blue throats while male Easterns have orange-red ones. Male Mountain Bluebirds lack any reddish coloration on their underparts. Females are more difficult to separate. Western Bluebirds have gray throats and gray bellies while Eastern Bluebirds have a brownish throat and white belly. Western Bluebirds are browner on the breast than Mountain Bluebirds and have thicker bills.

Mountain bluebird *Sialia currucoides*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches

Thin bill

Most often seen in open habitats

Adult male:

Bright blue plumage; brightest on upperparts

Lacks any brown coloration

Female:

Blue wings and tail-duller than male

Remainder of plumage gray

Eye ring

Juvenile:

Blue wings and tail-duller than male

White eye ring

Spotted underparts

Similar species:

The Mountain Bluebird is most likely to be confused with other bluebirds. Male Mountain Bluebirds lack any reddish coloration on their underparts unlike Eastern and Western Bluebirds. Females are more difficult to separate. Eastern Bluebirds have a brownish throat and white belly while Mountain Bluebirds have gray throats and bellies. Western Bluebirds are browner on the breast than Mountain Bluebirds and have thicker bills. Male Mountain Bluebirds might be confused with other all blue birds like Indigo Buntings and Blue Grosbeaks but these birds have much thicker, conical bills.

Townsend's solitaire *Myadestes townsendi*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.75 inches

Short, thick bill

White eye ring

Dark gray plumage

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Buff wing stripe

Sexes similar

Juvenile has pale spots on head and body

Similar species:

The Townsend's solitaire is unlikely to be confused with any other species.

Veery Catharus fuscescens

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches

Cinnamon upperparts in eastern United States birds, duller in western birds

Indistinct eye ring

Breast buffy with small dark spots, spots larger in western birds

Underparts white with gray flanks

Pink legs

Thin bill with pale base

Sexes similar

Often forages on forest floor

Distinctive beautiful song

Similar species:

The Veery resides in forests where it is more often heard than seen. It is similar to other thrushes but has smaller, less extensive spotting on the breast and uniformly light brown upperparts. In the western United States, Veeries and Swainson's Thrushes have similar upperpart coloration and spotting on the breast. They can be separated by flank color-gray in Veery and brown in Swainson's, and by vocalizations.

Gray-cheeked thrush *Catharus minimus*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 6.25? inches
- Olive-brown upperparts
- Gray, indistinct eye ring
- Gray cheeks
- Dark spots on breast
- Underparts white with grayish flanks
- Pink legs
- Thin bill with pale base to lower mandible
- Sexes similar
- Often forages on forest floor
- Distinctive song

Similar species:

The Gray-cheeked thrush resides in forests where it is more often heard than seen. It is quite similar to other thrushes. The Bicknell's Thrush, until recently conspecific with the Gray-cheeked Thrush, is very similar and may not be separable in the field. It is slightly smaller, has shorter wings with a shorter primary projection, buffier face and breast, more noticeable eye ring, and a more extensively pale lower mandible. These two species can be most easily separated on the breeding grounds as they have different ranges and songs. The Swainson's Thrush is quite similar but has buffy spectacles and lacks the gray cheeks. Veery is smaller, browner, lacks gray cheeks and has less spotting on the breast. Hermit Thrush has a rusty rump and tail. The songs and calls of the thrushes are very helpful in identifying them although Gray-cheeked Thrush does not sing much during migration.

Bicknell's thrush *Catharus bicknelli*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 6.25? inches
- Olive-brown upperparts
- Gray, indistinct eye ring
- Gray cheeks
- Dark spots on breast
- Underparts white with grayish flanks
- Pink legs
- Thin bill with pale base to lower mandible
- Sexes similar
- Often forages on forest floor
- Distinctive song

Similar species:

The Bicknell's thrush resides in forests where it is more often heard than seen. It is quite similar to other thrushes. The Bicknell's Thrush, until recently conspecific with the Gray-cheeked Thrush, is very similar and may not be separable in the field. It is slightly smaller, has shorter wings with a shorter primary projection, buffier face and breast, more noticeable eye ring, and a more extensively pale lower mandible. These two species can be most easily separated on the breeding grounds as they have different ranges and songs. The Swainson's Thrush is quite similar but has buffy spectacles and lacks the gray cheeks. Veery is smaller, browner, lacks gray cheeks and has less spotting on the breast. Hermit Thrush has a rusty rump and tail. The songs and calls of the thrushes are very helpful in identifying them although Bicknell's Thrush does not sing much during migration.

Swainson's thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches

Eastern United States have olive-brown upperparts-browner in western birds

Buff spectacles

Dark spots on breast

Underparts white with brownish flanks

Pink legs

Thin bill with pale base to lower mandible

Sexes similar

Often forages on forest floor

Distinctive song

Similar species:

The Bicknell's thrush resides in forests where it is more often heard than seen. It most similar to other thrushes. Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes lack buff spectacles and have gray cheeks. In the East, Veeries have rustier upperparts, less spotting on the breast and lack spectacles. In the West, Veeries and Swainson's Thrushes are quite similar and can be separated by flank color, gray in Veeries and brown in Swainson's. Wood and Hermit Thrushes have rusty areas on their upperparts.

Hermit thrush *Catharus guttatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches

Eastern United States have olive-brown upperparts-gray-brown in western birds

White eye ring

Dark spots on breast

Underparts white with brownish to grayish flanks

Pink legs

Thin bill with pale base to lower mandible

Sexes similar

Often forages on forest floor

Distinctive song

Only brown-backed thrush to regularly winter in the United States

Migrates earlier in Spring and later in Fall than similar-looking thrushes

Similar species:

The Hermit Thrush resides in forests where it is more often heard than seen. It most similar to other thrushes but can be told from them by its rusty rump and tail contrasting with the duller back and wings. Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes lack white eye rings and have gray cheeks. Veeries have less spotting on the breast. Swainson's Thrushes have buffy spectacles. Wood Thrushes have larger, and more extensive spotting on the underparts. In the eastern United States, Fox Sparrows are somewhat similar but have conical bills and streaked backs.

Wood thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 7 inches
- Rusty crown, nape and upper back
- White eye ring and streaked cheeks
- White underparts with black spots throughout
- Brown upperparts
- Pink legs
- Sexes similar
- Juvenile has pale spots on upperparts
- Often forages on forest floor
- Distinctive beautiful song

Similar species:

The Wood Thrush resides in forests in the eastern United States where it is more often heard than seen. It is similar to other thrushes but has larger spots that extend onto the belly and contrast between the rusty head and duller brown back. Brown Thrasher is somewhat similar but has a much longer tail.

Clay-colored robin *Turdus grayi*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Entirely pale yellowish-brown plumage darker on upperparts

Streaked throat

Thin yellow bill

Sexes similar

Rare stray to southern Texas

Similar species:

The Clay-colored Robin is unlikely to be confused with other species in its limited United States range.

American robin *Turdus migratorius*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches

Black to dark gray head

Broken eye ring

Dull red breast and belly

White undertail coverts

Gray upperparts

Streaked throat

Thin yellow bill

Sexes similar-female somewhat paler

Winter plumage is somewhat paler than Summer plumage

Juveniles have spotted, whiter breasts

Common in residential areas where it often forages on lawns

Often sings very early in morning

Often found in large flocks outside of breeding season

Similar species:

The American Robin is a common occupant of residential areas during the breeding season. In Fall and Winter, it can be found in large, somewhat nomadic flocks in areas with lots of fruiting trees. The very rare Rufous-backed Robin (southwestern United States) has a rufous, not gray, back. The Varied Thrush has a dark band across its breast and orange wing bars.

Varied thrush *Ixoreus naevius*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches

Orange stripe extends rearward from eye

Dark mask and crown

Orange underparts with dark breast band

Dark gray upperparts

Orange wing bars

Female similar to male but browner above with paler breast band

Similar species:

The Varied Thrush is somewhat similar to the American Robin but has a dark breast band, orange eye stripe, and orange wing bars.

Wrentit *Chamaea fasciata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches

Short bill

Dark brown head, flanks and upperparts

Pinkish throat and breast with blurry streaks

Very long brown tail

Yellow eye

Sexes similar

Found along Pacific coast in dense vegetation

Southern birds grayer than northern birds

Similar species:

Long tail and dark brown plumage make the wrentit unlikely to be confused with any other bird.

Gray catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.75 inches

Slender bill

Dark gray plumage

Dark eye

Chestnut undertail coverts

Crown and tail black

Black legs

Sexes similar

Often found in dense vegetation

Distinctive call like cat's meow

Similar species:

The plumage and call of the catbird are quite distinctive.

Northern mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9 inches

Slender bill

Gray head and upperparts

Yellow eye

White underparts

Long black tail with white outer tail feathers

White wing bars

White patch in wing, especially visible in flight

Black legs

Sexes similar

Juvenile has spotted breast

Most often found in scrubby habitats and in urban areas

Similar species:

Shrikes are similar but have black masks and thicker bills. Sage Thrasher is similar to juvenile mockingbird but lacks white wing patches and has darker, more extensive spotting below. Rare Bahama Mockingbird (stray to Florida) has streaked flanks and lacks wing patches.

Sage thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Slender bill

Pale gray head and upperparts

Yellow eye

White underparts with extensive black spotting

Long gray tail with paler tip

Faint wing bars

Sexes similar

Juvenile somewhat browner

Similar species:

Bendire's and Curve-billed Thrashers have decurved bills, browner upperparts, and less spotted underparts. Juvenile Northern Mockingbird is also mostly gray with spotted underparts but it has white wing patches.

Brown thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Slender bill with base of lower mandible yellow

Rufous crown, nape and upperparts

Gray face

Yellow eye

White underparts with heavy black streaking

White wing bars

Long rufous tail

Yellow legs

Sexes similar

Most often found in dense vegetation in hedgerows, old fields, and wood edges where it often forages on the ground

Similar species:

With its rufous upperparts and long tail the Brown Thrasher might be confused with the local Long-billed Thrasher (South Texas) but it has a shorter, less decurved bill and a browner face. Thrushes are similar but are spotted below and have shorter tails.

Long-billed thrasher *Toxostoma longirostre*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Long, decurved bill

Rufous crown, nape and upperparts

Gray face

Orange eye

White underparts with heavy black streaking

White wing bars

Long rufous tail

Yellow legs

Sexes similar

Only found in South Texas where it often forages on the ground

Similar species:

With its rufous upperparts and long tail the Brown Thrasher might be confused with the local Long-billed Thrasher (South Texas) but it has a shorter, less decurved bill and a browner face. Thrushes are similar but are spotted below and have shorter tails.

Bendire's thrasher *Toxostoma bendirei*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.25 inches

Short, slightly decurved bill with indistinct yellow base

Yellow eye

Gray-brown plumage

Underparts with indistinct dark spots on breast

Long dark tail with pale tip

Dark legs

Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Curve-billed Thrasher is most likely to be confused with the very similar Bendire's Thrasher. Bendire's can be told from adult Curve-billed by its smaller size and straighter bill with a yellow base to the lower mandible. Juvenile Curve-billed is very similar to Bendire's. Other thrashers lack spotting below.

Curve-billed thrasher *Toxostoma curvirostre*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches

Long, decurved bill

Gray-brown plumage

Underparts with indistinct dark spots on breast

Long dark tail

Dark legs

Sexes similar

Juveniles have shorter bills

Some birds have pale wing bars and a pale tip to the tail

Similar species:

The Curve-billed Thrasher is most likely to be confused with the very similar Bendire's Thrasher. Bendire's can be told from adult Curve-billed by its smaller size and straighter bill with a yellow base to the lower mandible. Juvenile Curve-billed is very similar to Bendire's. Other thrashers lack spotting below.

California thrasher *Toxostoma redivivum*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10 inches
Long, decurved bill
Pale supercilium
Dark eye
Very dark cheek
Pale throat
Dark brown plumage
Belly is paler brown
Long dark tail
Dark legs
Sexes similar

Similar species:

The California Thrasher is quite similar to Crissal and Le Conte's Thrashers. It has a paler supercilium, darker cheeks and less rusty undertail coverts than the Crissal. Le Conte's is paler overall and lacks the pale supercilium and dark cheeks. The range of the California does not overlap much with the other species. Other thrashers have spotted underparts and pale eyes.

Crissal thrasher *Toxostoma crissale*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10.5 inches
Long, decurved bill
Dark eye
Pale throat
Dark gray-brown plumage
Belly and undertail coverts rusty
Long dark tail
Dark legs
Sexes similar

Similar species:

Le Conte's Thrasher is paler and lacks rusty undertail coverts. California Thrasher has a paler supercilium and darker cheeks. The ranges of California and Crissal Thrashers do not overlap much. Other thrashers have spotted underparts and pale eyes.

Le Conte's thrasher *Toxostoma lecontei*

Identification Tips:

Length: 9.25 inches

Long, decurved bill

Dark eye

Pale throat

Gray-brown plumage

Belly and undertail coverts brown

Long dark tail

Dark legs

Sexes similar

Prefers arid habitats in southwestern United States

Similar species:

California and Crissal Thrashers are darker. Crissal has rustier undertail coverts and California has a paler supercilium and darker cheeks. Other thrashers have spotted underparts and pale eyes.

European starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches

Pointed bill-yellow for most of year, dark in fall

Black plumage with green and purple iridescence

White spots scattered about head and body-largest in fall

Dark wings and tail

Pointed wings

Short tail

Juvenile gray-brown with faint streaking below

Very common-frequently seen in large flocks

Similar species:

The European Starling is somewhat similar to blackbirds, cowbirds and grackles but has a shorter tail, chunkier body, white spots on the head and body (most evident in fall), and a yellow bill (not evident in the fall).

Yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Slender bill

Yellow underparts

Olive back

Dark wings with some white edges

White supercilium

Gray head

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Dark legs

Sexes similar

Juveniles have duller plumage, paler underparts and dark malar streaks connecting across the upper breast

Breeds in Alaska

Similar species:

Rarer Gray Wagtail has yellow rump and white wing stripe.

White wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches

Slender bill

Black cap, nape, throat and upper breast

White forehead and side of face

Black eyeline

Gray back

White patch in wing

White underparts

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Dark legs

Female has pale throat

Juveniles have duller, browner plumage

Breeds in Alaska

Similar species:

Black-backed Wagtail is similar to White Wagtail. Male has black, not gray, back and more white in wings. Females and juveniles very similar.

Red-throated pipit *Anthus cervinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Slender bill

White eye ring and supercilium

White throat with dark malar streak

Dark brown upperparts with black and whitish streaks on back

Wings blackish with whitish wing bars

Buffy underparts with dark streaking across breast and onto flanks

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Pink legs

In Spring and Summer, has distinctive pinkish throat and supercilium

Sexes similar

Wags its tail

Breeds in Alaska and very rare migrant in California

Similar species:

Sprague's Pipit has a less heavily streaked breast while American Pipit has dark legs. Sparrows and longspurs can be found in similar habitats but have thick, conical bills.

American pipit *Anthus rubescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Slender bill

White eye ring and supercilium

White throat with dark malar streak

Brownish-olive upperparts with fine black streaks on back

Wings blackish with broad buffy edges

Buffy underparts with dark streaking across breast and onto flanks

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Dark legs

In Spring and Summer, less heavily streaked below and upperparts grayer

Sexes similar

Wags its tail

Often found in flocks on the ground in sparsely vegetated areas (plowed fields, shores, tundra)

Similar species:

The American Pipit is similar to the Sprague's Pipit but the Sprague's Pipit has much less streaking on the underparts, more streaking on the back, a paler face, and pink legs. The rare Red-throated Pipit (breeds in Alaska and rare migrant in California) has a different call and pink legs. Sparrows and longspurs can be found in similar habitats but have thick, conical bills.

Sprague's pipit *Anthus spragueii*

Identification Tips:

- Length: 5.5 inches
- Slender bill
- Pale buffy face with white eye ring and dark eye
- White throat with dark malar streak
- Pale brown upperparts with thick black streaks
- Wings blackish with broad pale edges
- Buffy underparts with fine streaking on breast
- Black tail with white outer tail feathers
- Pink legs
- Sexes similar
- Most often found in fields with short grass
- Difficult to see, most often found when it is flushed

Similar species:

The American Pipit is similar to the Sprague's Pipit but the Sprague's Pipit has much less streaking on the underparts, more streaking on the back, a paler face, and pink legs. The Sprague's Pipit is easiest to identify by its call since it is rarely observed on the ground. It often calls upon being flushed. The rare Red-throated Pipit (breeds in Alaska and rare migrant in California) has a different call and more streaking on the underparts. Sparrows and longspurs can be found in similar habitats but have thick, conical bills.

Bohemian waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches

Short, thin bill

Pale brown crest

Black eye patch and chin

Brown forehead

Pale brown head fading into pale gray belly

Brown undertail coverts

Dark gray back

Black wings with white, yellow and red bars

Black tail with yellow tip

Juveniles have much duller head and body with blurry streaks on underparts

Frequently found in large flocks feeding on fruit

Similar species:

The Bohemian Waxwing is similar to the Cedar Waxwing but has dark undertail coverts, gray belly and white and yellow markings in the wing.

Cedar waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Short, thin bill

Pale brown crest

Black eye patch and chin

Pale brown head fading into pale yellow belly

White undertail coverts

Dark brown back

Dark wings with thin, red bar

Black tail with yellow tip

Juveniles have much duller, grayer head and body with blurry streaks on underparts

Frequently found in large flocks feeding on fruit

Similar species:

The Bohemian Waxwing is similar to the Cedar Waxwing but has dark undertail coverts, gray belly and white and yellow markings in the wing.

Phainopepla *Phainopepla nitens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches

Short, thin bill

Dark crest

Males have entirely black plumage, females gray

White wing patches visible in flight

Long tail

Juveniles are similar to females

Similar species:

The Phainopepla is unlikely to be confused with any other species.

Olive warbler *Ignoramuses taeniatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Somewhat thin, pointed bill

Whitish from lower breast to undertail coverts

Grayish back and wings

White wing bars

Black legs

United States range restricted to southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico

Adult male:

Black mask

Head, throat, and upper breast dull orange

Female and immature:

Dark cheek patch

Yellow-orange to yellow wash on throat and breast

Crown greenish

Similar species:

The male Olive Warbler is easily recognized by its black mask and orange head and breast. Females and immatures can be told from other species by their unstreaked underparts and dark cheek patch.

Blue-winged warbler *Vermivora pinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin, very pointed bill

Yellow head and underparts

White undertail coverts

Black eyeline

Olive nape and back

Blue-gray wings with two white wing bars

Pinkish legs

Females and immatures have paler yellow heads and breasts

Similar species:

The yellow, unstreaked head and underparts and the black eyeline identify the Blue-winged Warbler. The Blue-winged Warbler occasionally hybridizes with the Golden-winged Warbler to produce offspring with characteristics of both parents. Some have mostly white underparts (Brewster's Warbler), while some have the yellow plumage of the Blue-winged but the dark throat of the Golden-winged (Lawrence's Warbler).

Golden-winged warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin, very pointed bill

Yellow forehead

Black mask and throat

White supercilium and malar streak

Grayish-white underparts

Yellow patch on wing

Gray upperparts

Dark legs

Considerable amounts of white in outer tail feathers

Females and immatures have less distinct head patterns than males

Similar species:

The gray and white plumage and black throat of the Golden-winged warbler is somewhat reminiscent of a chickadee but note the yellow forehead and wing patch of the warbler. The Blue-winged Warbler occasionally hybridizes with the Golden-winged Warbler to produce offspring with characteristics of both parents. Some have mostly white underparts but the face pattern of the Blue-winged Warbler (Brewster's Warbler), while some have the yellow plumage of the Blue-winged but the face pattern of the Golden-winged (Lawrence's Warbler). These hybrids sometimes backcross with Blue-winged or Golden-winged to produce offspring more similar to Blue-winged or Golden-winged.

Tennessee warbler *Vermivora peregrina*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, very pointed bill
Olive back and wings
No wing bars
White undertail coverts

Adult male alternate:

Gray crown
White supercilium and dark eyeline
White underparts

Basic, female and immature:

Olive crown
Yellowish supercilium
Greenish-yellow throat and breast

Similar species:

In Spring, the male Tennessee Warbler, with its plain olive upperparts, gray crown, white supercilium and plain white underparts resembles a miniature Red-eyed Vireo but note its thinner, pointed bill and dark eye. In fall, the plumage is more similar to a Philadelphia Vireo but, again, note the thin, sharply pointed bill and smaller size. The Orange-crowned Warbler is very similar but has yellow undertail coverts and blurry streaks on the breast.

Orange-crowned warbler *Vermivora celata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin, very pointed bill

Indistinct yellow supercilium

Indistinct broken eye ring

Grayish to olive head, back and wings

No wing bars

Yellow to dull yellow/olive underparts with blurry, indistinct streaks on breast

Yellow undertail coverts

Orange crown patch rarely visible

Females and immatures somewhat duller

Considerable variation in plumage with western birds being somewhat yellower and eastern birds grayer

Similar species:

The Orange-crowned Warbler is extremely nondescript. In fact, this is one of the best field marks for identifying it! Other warblers have wing bars, black streaking below, brighter underparts or distinctive face patterns. The yellow undertail coverts and blurry streaks on the breast separate it from the very similar fall-plumaged Tennessee Warbler

Nashville warbler *Vermivora ruficapilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin, very pointed bill

White eye ring

Yellow throat, breast, and undertail coverts

White belly

Olive upperparts

No wing bars

Rusty crown patch of male is rarely visible

Male has gray head, female and immature's is duller, more olive

Similar species:

The Nashville Warbler is similar to a number of other warblers. It can be identified by its white eye ring, underparts pattern (yellow from throat to breast, white belly, and yellow undertail coverts), and lack of wing bars. In Fall, the Connecticut Warbler is similar but larger, has a heavier and less pointed bill, yellow belly and an olive wash across the breast. Tennessee and Orange-crowned Warblers lack the eye ring instead having a pale supercilium.

Virginia's warbler *Vermivora virginiae*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin, very pointed bill

White eye ring

Gray upperparts

Grayish underparts with yellowish patch on breast

Yellow rump and undertail coverts

Plain gray wings

Dark legs

Females and immatures similar to males but somewhat paler and may have some buff on underparts

Similar species:

Lucy's Warbler is similar but lacks white eye ring and yellow rump and undertail coverts. Nashville Warbler has yellower underparts and more olive upperparts. Colima Warbler is larger and darker and its range is restricted to a small area in Texas

Colima warbler *Vermivora crissalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin, very pointed bill

White eye ring

Dark gray head

Brownish-gray back and wings

Somewhat paler below

Dull yellow rump and undertail coverts

United States range restricted to Chisos Mountains in Texas

Similar species:

Virginia's Warbler is smaller and paler.

Lucy's warbler *Vermivora luciae*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin, very pointed bill

Pale gray upperparts

Whitish underparts

Rusty uppertail coverts

Plain gray wings

Dark legs

Males have small rusty patch on crown

Females and immatures similar to males but somewhat paler and may have some buff on underparts

Similar species:

The whitish undertail coverts of the Lucy's Warbler separate it from other grayish warblers like Virginia's and Orange-crowned that have yellow undertail coverts. Bell's Vireo is somewhat similar but has a heavier bill and lacks rusty uppertail coverts.

Northern parula *Parula americana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.75 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Smaller than most warblers
Gray head, sides of breast, rump and tail
White broken eye ring
White wing bars
Yellow throat and breast
White belly and undertail coverts
Olive back
Yellow legs

Adult male:

Black and orange patch across breast
Black lores and eyeline

Female and immature:

Lacks breast patch of male
Lacks black in face of male
White supercilium
Plumage duller than male

Similar species:

The Northern Parula is rather small, even for a warbler. The male Northern Parula is distinctive with its breast patch. No other warbler has this feature. Females have a yellow throat and breast, wing bars, small size, and broken eye ring to identify them. Yellowthroats and Mourning Warblers are most similar in face and underpart pattern but lack wing bars. The very local (South Texas) Tropical Parula is similar in size but the male lacks the dark portion of the breast patch and has more black on the face while the other plumages lack the broken eye ring and have more yellow on the underparts.

Tropical parula *Parula pitiayumi*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.75 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Gray head, wings, rump and tail
Olive back
White wing bars
Yellow throat and breast
White belly and undertail coverts
Yellow legs
United States range restricted to South Texas

Adult male:

Black mask
Orange wash on breast

Female and immature:

Lacks mask
Plumage generally duller than male

Similar species:

The very local (South Texas) Tropical Parula is similar in size to the Northern Parula but lacks the broken eye ring and has more yellow on the underparts. Male Tropical Parula has a black mask that the Northern Parula lacks and has less marking on the breast. Other warblers lack the combination of an unmarked yellow breast and throat, wing bars, and a gray head

Yellow warbler *Dendroica petechia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin, pointed bill

Mostly yellow plumage

Upperparts greenish-yellow

Greenish-yellow wings and tail with yellow feather edges

Plain yellow face with yellow eye ring surrounding dark eye

Yellowish legs

Adult male:

Plumage golden yellow

Rusty streaks on breast and flanks

Female and immature:

Plain yellow plumage

Streaks on breast absent or barely noticeable

Some birds have pale gray wash to plumage (southwestern United States)

Similar species:

The male Yellow Warbler is easily recognized by its golden yellow plumage and rusty streaks on the breast. Females and immatures are similar to other mostly yellow warblers. Prothonotary Warblers have blue-gray, not yellowish wings and white undertail coverts. Wilson's and Hooded Warblers have a yellow supercilium and a more capped appearance. Blue-winged and Orange-crowned Warblers have dark eyelines.

Chestnut-sided warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Yellow wing bars
Thin, pointed bill
Black legs

Adult male alternate:

Yellow crown
White patch on side of neck surrounded by thick black eyeline and black malar streak
Black malar streak connects with thick rusty stripe on side
White underparts
Black back with white streaks
Female in alternate plumage similar to male but duller with reduced rust on sides

Basic and immature:

Green crown, nape and back
Gray face and sides of breast
White eye ring
White belly and undertail coverts
Some rust may be present on sides

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the only other warbler with rusty sides is the Bay-breasted Warbler but it has a brown, not yellow, crown and has a dark throat. In basic (fall) and immature plumages the yellow wing bars can also be found in the Golden-winged Warbler but this species has a dark throat and cheek patch. The white eye ring, unstreaked underparts, and gray face are also good field marks.

Magnolia warbler *Dendroica magnolia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Bright yellow rump
Thin, pointed bill
Broken white band in tail

Adult male alternate:

Black mask
White supercilium and broken eye ring
Pale gray crown
Black back
Golden yellow underparts
Heavy black streaks across breast and onto flanks
Gray wings with thick white edging
Females in alternate plumage similar but duller

Basic and immature:

Indistinct white eye ring and supercilium
Head grayish
Back grayish-olive with variable amounts of black streaking (heaviest in adult males)
Grayish band across breast
Yellow to yellow-gray throat
Fine to thick black streaking on flanks
White wing bars

Similar species:

The breeding-plumage Magnolia Warbler is quite distinctive with its bright yellow underparts with thick black streaks and black mask. Basic and immature plumaged birds are more difficult to identify. The yellow underparts with streaking confined to the flanks is also found in Prairie, Kirtland's, Black-throated Green, and Blackburnian Warblers. All these species lack a gray breast band and white tail band. Blackburnian has a bold yellow supercilium. Black-throated Green has a yellow face. Prairie wags its tail and has a different face pattern. Kirtland's Warbler has darker gray upperparts

Cape may warbler *Dendroica tigrina*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Yellow rump
Black legs

Adult male alternate:

Chestnut cheek patch
Yellow on throat extends across side of face and onto nape
Yellow supercilium
Yellow underparts with crisp, heavy black streaking
Belly and undertail coverts whiter than breast
Olive crown and back with black streaks
White patch on wings

Basic, female and immature:

Lacks cheek patch of alternate male
Dull yellow on throat extends across side of face and onto nape
Yellow supercilium
Dull yellow to whitish-yellow underparts with fine black streaking
Belly and undertail coverts paler than breast
Olive to grayish crown and back with some black streaking
White wing bars

Similar species:

The breeding-plumaged male Cape May Warbler is very distinctive with its heavily streaked yellow underparts and bold face pattern. Females, and fall-plumaged birds are more difficult to identify. Some immatures can become rather grayish in fall with very dull markings. The extensive fine black streaking on the underparts and the yellow neck patch are diagnostic. The Yellow-rumped Warbler is similar but has more blurry streaking on the breast that is not so extensive as the Cape May. It also has a brighter yellow rump and a thicker bill. Palm Warblers are somewhat similar but consistently wag their tails and have yellow undertail coverts.

Black-throated blue warbler *Dendroica caerulescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin, pointed bill

Small white patch in wing can be inconspicuous in immatures

Often found in the understory of forests rather than the canopy

Adult male:

Black face, throat, and sides

Remainder of underparts white

Deep blue crown, nape back and wing coverts

Immature males similar to adult males but can have a greenish wash to the upperparts and have a whitish chin

Female:

Gray crown and cheek patch

White supercilium

Grayish upperparts

Dark wings and tail

Yellowish-white underparts

Similar species:

The male Black-throated Blue Warbler is instantly recognizable. Females are rather nondescript but the small white patch in the wing is diagnostic. When this patch is absent, look for the dark cheek patch contrasting with the white supercilium. The unstreaked underparts and lack of wing bars are also helpful field marks.

Yellow-rumped warbler *Dendroica coronata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Small, active bird

Bright yellow rump

Thin, pointed bill-but sturdier and thicker than most warblers

White spots in tail

Winters farther north than other warblers

Eastern (formerly called Myrtle Warbler) and western forms (formerly called Audubon's Warbler) were previously separate species

Adult male-eastern(Myrtle Warbler):

Black mask

White supercilium and broken eye ring

Small, yellow, crown patch

Blue-gray crown, nape, back and wing coverts with black streaks

White throat

Yellow patch at side of breast

Black patches on upper breast extend as streaks onto flanks

White underparts

White wing bars

Basic, female and immature-eastern(Myrtle Warbler):

Broken eye ring

Head and back brown to brownish-gray with black streaks on back (brownier in the fall)

Indistinct to absent yellow patch on side of breast

Blurry dark streaking on breast and flanks

White throat

White wing bars

Adult male-western(Audubon's Warbler):

Dark gray head and back

Broken eye ring

Small, yellow, crown patch

Yellow throat

Yellow patch at side of breast

Black patches on upper breast extend as streaks onto flanks

White underparts

White wing patch

Basic, female and immature-western(Audubon's Warbler):

Broken eye ring

Head and back brown to brownish-gray with black streaks on back

Indistinct to absent yellow patch on side of breast

Blurry dark streaking on breast and flanks

Yellow to buffy throat

White wing bars

Similar species:

The male Yellow-rumped Warbler is quite distinctive with its yellow patches at the sides of the breast and black upper breast. Magnolia Warblers have yellow bellies. Females and immatures are less colorful and more difficult to identify. The often obvious yellow rump is brighter than other species with yellow rumps (Magnolia, Palm, and Cape May). When present, the yellow patches at the sides of the breast are not found in these other species. Cape May Warbler has finer and more extensive streaking on the breast and a yellow neck patch. Palm Warbler has yellow undertail coverts and actively pumps its tail. Magnolia Warblers have much more yellow below.

Black-throated gray warbler *Dendroica nigrescens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
White wing bars
Dark legs

Adult male:

Black crown, cheeks and throat
Broad, white line behind eye and malar streak
Yellow spot on lores
Gray upperparts with black streaks on back
White underparts with black streaks on flanks

Female, basic and immature:

Plumage similar to male
White throat
Crown and cheeks dark gray

Similar species:

The lack of yellow in the plumage of the Black-throated Gray Warbler (except for the lores) distinguishes it from all warblers except the Blackpoll (alternate male) and Black-and-white Warblers. Both those species have different face patterns and the Black-and-white Warbler behaves quite differently preferring to forage on the trunks and main branches of trees nuthatchlike rather than in the leaves and smaller twigs.

Golden-cheeked warbler *Dendroica chrysoparia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
White wing bars
Dark legs
Range in United States limited to central Texas

Adult male:

Black crown, back, eyeline, throat and breast
Yellow face
White underparts with black streaks on flanks

Female and immature:

Plumage similar to male
Upperparts olive with variable amounts of black streaks
Throat and breast white with black smudges

Similar species:

The black head, yellow face and thin black eyeline are distinctive in the male Golden-cheeked Warbler. In migration, when other species might be found in the same range, Black-throated Green and Townsend's Warblers typically have darker cheeks without the obvious eyeline of the Golden-cheeked.

Black-throated green warbler *Dendroica virens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Yellow face
Olive crown and back
Indistinct greenish cheeks
Underparts pale with yellowish tinge and black streaks on sides
White wing bars
Dark legs

Adult male:

Black throat and upper breast
In fall, throat and upper breast feathers are edged with yellow

Female and immature:

Plumage similar to male
Throat pale, sometimes with black spots
Breast smudged with black

Similar species:

The male Black-throated Green Warbler is distinctive with its black throat, yellow face, and olive crown. Within most of its eastern United States range, it is unlikely to be confused with any other species. Males of other western species are somewhat similar: Hermit Warbler has a yellow crown, Golden-cheeked Warbler has a black crown and eyeline, Townsend's Warbler has black cheeks. In fall, the yellow face of the Black-throated Green barely contrasts with the greener crown and cheeks. Blackburnian Warbler has a darker crown and cheeks and white streaks on the back. Townsend's Warbler also has darker cheeks. Hermit Warbler has a more uniformly yellow head and less streaking on the sides.

Townsend's warbler *Dendroica townsendi*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Broad, yellow supercilium, malar streak and rear of face
Olive back with black streaks
White wing bars
Dark legs

Adult male:

Black cheek and crown
Black throat and upper breast
Mostly yellow underparts with black streaks at sides

Female and immature:

Female has blackish crown and cheeks while immature's are dark green
Yellow throat
Yellow breast, white belly, sides and undertail coverts
Black streaks on sides

Similar species:

The face pattern of the Townsend's Warbler is very distinctive. Other species of warbler with mostly yellow faces, wing bars and streaked flanks don't have such black or dark green cheeks and crowns contrasting with the yellow supercilium.

Hermit warbler *Dendroica occidentalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Yellow face and forehead
Grayish nape and upperparts
Mostly white underparts with no black streaks at sides
White wing bars
Dark legs

Adult male:

Black throat
A few black spots at sides of upper breast

Female and immature:

Cheeks are ever-so-slightly darker than rest of face
Throat white to yellow and may be smudged with black

Similar species:

Other warblers with mostly yellow faces and wing bars have darker crowns and streaked flanks.

Blackburnian warbler *Dendroica fusca*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Mostly forages very high in the canopy
Thin, pointed bill
Dark legs

Adult male alternate:

Black crown and cheeks
Fiery orange forehead, supercilium, side of neck, throat, and breast
Black nape, back and wings
White patch on wing
White streaks on back
Lower breast faintly tinged with orange becoming white on undertail coverts
Fine black streaks on sides of breast to flanks

Female, basic and immature:

Pale orange to yellow face and breast
Crown, cheek, and upperparts brownish-olive
Pale streaks on darker back
Two white wing bars
White belly and undertail coverts
Faint, dark streaks on sides

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the bright orange throat and face pattern of the male are diagnostic. Often, the face pattern cannot be seen as the bird forages high in the canopy. However, the orange breast and black streaks on the sides are distinctive. Female and immature plumages are duller but can be distinguished by the broad yellow supercilium contrasting with the brownish crown and cheek. In fall, Black-throated Green Warbler is similar but has a greenish cheek and crown that don't contrast much with the yellow supercilium. Townsend's Warbler also has a broad yellow supercilium but has a darker cheek and crown making the face pattern appear much more striking. Both Townsend's and Black-throated Green Warblers lack the pale streaks on the back of the Blackburnian.

Yellow-throated warbler *Dendroica dominica*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Often forages high in the canopy

Long, thin, slightly decurved bill

White supercilium-lores can be white or yellow (depending on race)

Black forehead, eyeline, cheek extends onto side of neck

White patch on neck

Gray upperparts

Yellow throat and breast

White underparts with black streaks on sides

White wing bars

Black legs

Female and immature plumages nearly identical to male

Similar species:

The face pattern of the Yellow-throated Warbler is unlike any other species except the Grace's Warbler. The Grace's Warbler lives in another part of the country (the Southwest) and lacks the white patch on the side of the neck.

Grace's warbler *Dendroica graciae*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Yellow supercilium
Black forehead
Gray upperparts
Yellow throat and breast
White underparts with black streaks on sides
White wing bars
Black legs
Female similar to male but paler

Similar species:

The face pattern of the Grace's Warbler is unlike any other species except the Yellow-throated Warbler. The Grace's Warbler lives in the Southwestern United States while the Yellow-throated inhabits the Southeast. Grace's lacks the white patch on the side of the neck of the Yellow-throated.

Pine warbler *Dendroica pinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Faint yellowish supercilium
Olive upperparts with unstreaked back
Yellow throat and breast with blurry streaks on sides
White belly and undertail coverts
White wing bars
Dark legs

Adult male:

Bright yellow throat and breast

Female and immature:

Plumage similar to male but duller
Brownish tinged upperparts

Similar species:

The relatively plain face pattern and yellow throat and breast of the Pine Warbler is somewhat similar to the Yellow-throated Vireo but the vireo has spectacles and a thicker bill. In Fall, the plumage is similar to the basic and immature plumages of several other warblers. The Blackburnian Warbler has white streaks on the back and a broader supercilium. Blackpoll Warbler has yellow legs and feet and a streaked back. Bay-breasted Warbler also has a streaked back, buffy undertail coverts and less streaking on the breast. Cape May Warbler has more streaking across the breast and a pale mark on the side of the neck. Orange-crowned Warbler has yellow undertail coverts and lacks wing bars.

Kirtland's warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Broken eye ring
Grayish nape and upperparts
Yellow throat, breast and belly
White undertail coverts
Streaked sides and flanks-sometimes across breast
Dull white wing bars
Dark legs
Wags its tail
Extremely limited range-breeds in Michigan

Adult male:

Black lores
Black streaks on gray back

Female and immature:

Gray lores
Brownish tinge to dark-streaked back

Similar species:

Other warblers that wag their tails are the Prairie and Palm Warblers. They have yellow rumps and yellow faces and lack the broken eye ring.

Prairie warbler *Dendroica discolor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin, pointed bill

Black line goes through eye and encircles yellow spot below

Yellow supercilium

Olive upperparts with rust streaks on back

Yellow underparts with dark streaks on sides

Yellow rump

Dark legs

Indistinct pale wing bars

Adult male has brightest plumage, female and immatures duller with black face markings replaced by gray

Frequently wags its tail

Often found in scrubby habitats

Similar species:

Prairie Warblers typically have a distinctive face pattern but this can be difficult to discern in immatures. Prairie Warblers often wag their tails. Palm Warblers also wag their tails but are paler below with more streaking on the breast.

Palm warbler *Dendroica palmarum*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Yellow undertail coverts
Yellowish rump
Dark legs
Frequently wags its tail
Often found in fields and scrubby habitats in fall and winter
Different races

Yellow (Eastern):

Rusty cap in adults-most obvious in males, may be absent in immatures
Bright yellow underparts with rusty streaks on breast
Olive-brown upperparts
Plumage brightest in Spring and Summer

Western:

Rusty cap in adults-most obvious in males, may be absent in immatures
Whitish underparts with dark streaks on breast
Throat may be yellow or whitish
Brownish-gray upperparts

Similar species:

The Palm Warbler is quite a variable species. Eastern birds in Spring are very bright yellow underneath with rusty caps and are quite showy. But immatures in fall can be very dull-especially the Western ones. But one field mark all Palm Warblers share is that they constantly pump their tails. The tail-wagging helps draw attention to another good field mark, the yellow undertail coverts. The Prairie Warbler also wags its tail but has brighter yellow underparts, lacks streaking on the breast and has a different face pattern.

Bay-breasted warbler *Dendroica castanea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
White wing bars
Thin, pointed bill
White spots visible on underside of tail
Black legs

Adult male alternate:

Brown crown, upper breast and sides
Black face
Buffy patch on side of neck
Whitish underparts
Female in alternate plumage similar to male but duller with reduced rust on sides

Basic and immature:

Greenish crown, nape and back with thin black streaks
Indistinct supercilium
Breast somewhat paler than upperparts
Creamy belly and undertail coverts
Some rust may be present on sides

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the only other warbler with rusty sides is the Chestnut-sided Warbler but it has a yellow crown and white throat. Basic (fall) and immature plumages are very dull and most similar to Blackpoll and Pine Warblers. The Blackpoll Warbler has yellow legs, white undertail coverts, and a streakier breast. Pine Warbler lacks black streaks on the back and is often yellower on the throat and breast. Often, Bay-breasted Warblers retain a trace of rusty sides in the fall.

Blackpoll warbler *Dendroica striata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
White wing bars
Thin, pointed bill
White spots visible on underside of tail
Yellow legs

Adult male alternate:

Black crown and malar streak
White face
Upperparts streaked black and white
Underparts mostly white with black streaks on the sides
Female's body plumage is similar but lacks the distinctive head pattern

Basic and immature:

Greenish crown, nape and back with thin black streaks
Indistinct supercilium
Breast paler than upperparts with faint darker streaks
White belly and undertail coverts

Similar species:

In alternate plumage, the black crown and white face of the male are somewhat similar to the Black-and-white Warbler but it has a striped crown and a different feeding strategy (it creeps along trunks and branches). Basic (fall) and immature plumages are very dull and most similar to Bay-breasted and Pine Warblers. The Bay-breasted Warbler has black legs, buffy undertail coverts, and a less streaky breast. Pine Warbler lacks black streaks on the back, has black legs and is often yellower on the throat and breast.

Cerulean warbler *Dendroica cerulea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Wing bars

Thin, pointed bill

Adult male:

Pale blue to blue-gray upperparts with black streaks on back

White underparts with thin black band across breast

Black streaks on sides

Female and immature:

White supercilium

Upperparts not as blue as male-more gray

Lacks breast band of male, streaking on sides reduced

Similar species:

Although not as colorful as some other warblers, the male Cerulean Warbler is recognizable by its white underparts crossed by a thin black band. This field mark is useful since this bird often forages high in the canopy where the pale blue upperparts are not easily seen. Females, and especially immatures, are very nondescript but have bold white superciliums, mostly white underparts, and wing bars. There is often a hint of bluish color, especially on the crown.

Black-and-white warbler *Mniotilta varia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, active, insect-eating bird
Long thin bill
Creeps along tree trunks and branches like a nuthatch
White supercilium, malar streak and central crown stripe
Black back with white streaks
Black wings with white wing bars
Streaked breast and flanks
Spotted undertail coverts
Black legs

Male:

Black crown, cheek, and throat (throat white in Fall and Winter)
White flanks with black streaks
Immature male has grayish cheeks and white throat

Female:

White throat, grayish cheeks
Buffy flanks with black streaks

Similar species:

The Black-and-white Warbler is perhaps the easiest warbler to identify with its distinctive nuthatch-like feeding strategy and contrasting black and white plumage. The male Blackpoll Warbler is also black and white but lacks the white supercilium and doesn't creep along trunks and branches

American redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Feeds very actively (even for a warbler)
Often fans tail exposing red or yellow patches

Adult male:

Orange-red sides of breast, wing and tail patches
Belly and undertail coverts white
Remainder of plumage black

Female and immature:

Yellow sides of breast, wing and tail patches
White underparts
Olive upperparts with grayer head
Immature males begin to acquire adult male pattern in second year

Similar species:

The adult male American Redstart is instantly recognizable with its black and red plumage. Females and immatures can be identified by the yellow patches at the base of the tail. Yellow patches at side of breast and in wing can be quite reduced in immatures.

Prothonotary warbler *Protonotaria citrea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird

Thin pointed bill

Often inhabits swampy areas

Golden-orange head in males, yellow in females and immatures

Olive back

Unstreaked yellow breast and underparts

White undertail coverts

Blue-gray wings and tail

White spots in tail

Black legs

Similar species:

The unstreaked underparts, plain yellow (or orange) head and breast, and lack of wing bars separate this species from most other warblers. The female Yellow Warbler has yellowish, not blue-gray wings and yellow undertail coverts. Blue-winged Warbler has black eyeline and wing bars.

Worm-eating warbler *Helmitheros vermivorus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird that often forages in dead leaves

Thin pointed bill

Black and buff head stripes

Buffy breast with whiter underparts

Upperparts solidly olive-brown

Pink legs

Sexes and ages similar in plumage

Similar species:

The bold head stripes on an otherwise plain bird make the Worm-eating Warbler unlikely to be confused with any other warbler.

Swainson's warbler *Limnothlypis swainsonii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches
Small, insect-eating bird
Thin pointed bill
Brown cap
Pale supercilium
Blackish eyeline
Upperparts solidly grayish-brown
Whitish unstreaked underparts
Pink legs
Sexes and ages similar
Difficult to see inhabitant of the Southeast

Similar species:

The pale supercilium, brown upperparts, and white underparts of the Swainson's Warbler are more reminiscent of a wren than a warbler. But wrens tend to carry their tails upright and have a very different shape. The Worm-eating Warbler has black and buff head stripes and a buffier breast.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Small, ground-dwelling, insect-eating bird

Thin, pointed bill

White eye ring

Orange central crown stripe with black border

White underparts with dense black streaking

Olive upperparts

Pink legs

Similar species:

The Ovenbird is most often seen as it walks along the forest floor. It might be confused with a sparrow but the bill is too narrow and the upperparts lack streaking and spotting. Other ground-dwelling warblers with streaked underparts are the waterthrushes but they constantly wag their tails and have white or yellow superciliums and lack eye rings.

Northern waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Small, ground-dwelling bird frequently found near water

Thin, pointed bill

Pale yellow supercilium

Throat finely spotted

White or yellowish underparts with dense black streaking

Dark brown upperparts

Pink legs

Constantly wags its tail

Similar species:

The Northern Waterthrush has densely streaked underparts that are also found in the Louisiana Waterthrush and Ovenbird. The Louisiana Waterthrush usually has a whiter, wider supercilium, and an unspotted throat. Some Northerns are distinctly yellowish on the underparts-Louisianas are always white (but can have buffy flanks). The songs of the two are quite different and are the best way to separate them. The Ovenbird does not pump its tail and lacks a pale supercilium instead having an eye ring.

Louisiana waterthrush *Seiurus motacilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches

Small, ground-dwelling bird frequently found near water

Thin, pointed bill

White supercilium

Throat mostly white

White underparts with dense black streaking

Dark brown upperparts

Pink legs

Constantly wags its tail

Similar species:

The Louisiana Waterthrush has densely streaked underparts that are also found in the Ovenbird and Northern Waterthrush. The Northern Waterthrush has a yellowish supercilium and a spotted throat. Some Northern Waterthrushes are distinctly yellowish on the underparts while Louisianas are always white underneath (sometimes with buffy flanks). The songs of the two are quite different and are the best way to separate them. The Ovenbird does not pump its tail and lacks the white supercilium instead having an eye ring.

Kentucky warbler *Oporornis formosus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Small, active, insect-eating bird frequently found near the ground

Thin, pointed bill

Yellow spectacles

Black forehead

Black patch below eye

Entirely yellow underparts

Olive upperparts

Pink legs

Females and immatures have slightly duller face patterns than males

Similar species:

The yellow underparts, olive upperparts and black patch below the eye of the Kentucky Warbler are superficially similar to the male Common Yellowthroat but the yellowthroat lacks the yellow spectacles and has a white belly. Other similar warblers lack the black patch below the eye.

Connecticut warbler *Oporornis agilis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Small, insect-eating bird frequently found near the ground

Large for a warbler

Thin, pointed bill

White or buffy eye ring

Yellow underparts

Olive upperparts

Yellow undertail coverts extend almost to end of tail

Pink legs

Males have complete gray hood; females and immatures have an olive wash across the breast and a whitish throat

Similar species:

The yellow underparts, olive upperparts, and lack of wing bars of the Connecticut Warbler are similar to Mourning, MacGillivray's, Nashville Warblers, and Common Yellowthroats. Male Mourning and MacGillivray's Warblers have black markings on the upper breast. Male Nashville Warblers have yellow throats and male Common Yellowthroats have black masks. In female and immature plumages, the Connecticut Warbler has a complete white or buff eye ring. Mourning, MacGillivray's and yellowthroats have broken eye rings. Nashvilles also have complete eye rings but are smaller and have white bellies and yellow breasts. Connecticut Warblers are bigger and have heavier bills than the other species. Connecticut Warblers spend much of their time walking on the ground and don't seem to forage as much in shrubs and trees as the other species.

Mourning warbler *Oporornis philadelphia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Yellow underparts
Olive upperparts
Pink legs

Male:

Complete gray hood
Black lores and breast patch
Breast patch less evident in Fall

Basic, female and immature:

Gray-brown wash to head
Broken white eye ring
Yellowish wash to throat
Breast can have brownish-olive cast

Similar species:

The MacGillivray's Warbler is the western counterpart to the eastern Mourning Warbler. Fortunately, the breeding ranges of the two species do not overlap. Male MacGillivray's typically have broken eye rings while they are absent in male Mourning Warblers. Females and immatures of the two species are extremely difficult to tell apart and are usually separated by range. Connecticut Warblers are similar to Mourning Warblers but have complete eye rings and are larger. Female and immature Common Yellowthroats are also quite similar but lack a gray or brownish wash across the breast (although this can be indistinct in some immatures) and have white, not yellow, bellies.

MacGillivray's warbler *Oporornis tolmiei*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Yellow underparts
Olive upperparts
Pink legs

Male:

Complete gray hood
Black lores and breast patch
Broken eye ring
Breast patch less evident in Fall

Basic, female and immature:

Gray-brown wash to head
Broken white eye ring
Yellowish wash to throat

Similar species:

The MacGillivray's Warbler is the western counterpart to the eastern Mourning Warbler. Fortunately, the breeding ranges of the two species do not overlap. Male MacGillivray's typically have broken eye rings while they are absent in male Mourning Warblers. Females and immatures of the two species are extremely difficult to tell apart and are best separated by range. Connecticut Warblers are similar to MacGillivray's Warblers but have complete eye rings, and are larger. Female and immature Common Yellowthroats are also quite similar but lack the gray or brownish hood of the MacGillivray's (although this can be indistinct in some immatures) and have white, not yellow, bellies

Common yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Yellow throat and breast
Brownish flanks
Whitish belly
Olive upperparts
Pink legs
Considerable plumage variation across its range

Adult male:

Black mask with white upper border
Bright yellow throat

Female and immature:

Brownish-olive head
Broken white eye ring
Throat and breast not as bright yellow as adult males
Immature males begin to acquire the black mask in the fall

Similar species:

The adult male Common Yellowthroat is instantly recognizable with its black mask. Immature males often have a semblance of the mask. Females and immatures are similar to female and immature Mourning and MacGillivray's Warblers but yellowthroats have whiter bellies and lack a gray hood or olive breast band

Hooded warbler *Wilsonia citrina*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Yellow face and underparts
Olive upperparts
Pink legs
Considerable amount of white in outer tail feathers

Male:

Black head and yellow face

Female:

Yellow supercilium
Olive crown
Some birds have faint blackish hoods

Similar species:

The male Hooded Warbler is instantly recognizable with its black and yellow face pattern. Females are similar to female Wilson's Warblers but Wilson's are smaller and lack white in the tail.

Wilson's warbler *Wilsonia pusilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill
Yellow supercilium and underparts
Olive upperparts
Pink legs
No white in outer tail feathers
Adult male has black cap

Similar species:

The adult male Wilson's Warbler is instantly recognizable with its black cap. Females are similar to female Hooded Warblers but Wilson's are smaller and lack white in the tail.

Canada warbler *Wilsonia canadensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Small, insect-eating bird

Thin, pointed bill

Yellow spectacles and underparts

White undertail coverts

Gray upperparts

Pink legs

No white in outer tail feathers

Adult male has black necklace and black on forehead and around eye; females and immatures have gray necklaces and foreheads

Similar species:

The adult male Canada Warbler is instantly recognizable with its black necklace. Females and immatures also have the diagnostic necklace but it is gray and less noticeable. The combination of gray upperparts, no wing bars and yellow underparts is unique.

Red-faced warbler *Cardellina rubrifrons*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Small, insect-eating bird

Thin, pointed bill

Red patch around bill extends onto breast

Red patch on side of neck

Black patch on ear coverts, behind eye and across crown

Small white patch on nape

Gray upperparts

White underparts

Similar species:

The Red-faced Warbler is instantly recognizable.

Painted redstart *Myioborus pictus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, insect-eating bird
Thin, pointed bill

Adult:

Red belly
White wing patches and outer tail feathers
White spot beneath eye
Remainder of plumage black

Juvenile:

White wing patches and outer tail feathers
Dark gray plumage
Adult plumage attained by fall

Similar species:

The Painted Redstart is instantly recognizable.

Slate-throated redstart *Myioborus miniatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Small, insect-eating bird

Thin, pointed bill

Red belly

White outer tail feathers

Remainder of plumage dark gray

Very rare stray to Arizona and New Mexico

Similar species:

The Painted Redstart is similar but has white wing patches and darker upperparts.

Yellow-breasted chat *Icteria virens*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches
The largest warbler
Thick bill
White spectacles
Yellow throat and breast
Whitish belly and undertail coverts
Olive upperparts
Fairly long tail
Dark legs
Females and males similar in plumage

Similar species:

The Yellow-breasted Chat is much larger than any other warbler. Its yellow throat and breast, olive upperparts and white spectacles make it unlikely to be confused with any other bird.

Hepatic tanager *Piranga flava*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.75 inches
Pointed, but fairly stout, dark bill
Inhabits treetops

Adult male:

Red plumage, brightest on underparts
Dark cheeks

Adult female:

Orange-yellow underparts
Dark cheeks
Olive back
Gray wings and tail
Immature plumage similar to female

Similar species:

The male Hepatic Tanager can be told from the similar male Summer Tanager by its dark bill and cheeks. Scarlet Tanager has black wings and tail. Female plumage can be told from similar female Summer Tanager by the darker cheeks and bill. Female Western Tanager has wing bars. Female Scarlet Tanager has more yellow underparts and a paler cheek.

Summer tanager *Piranga rubra*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches
Pointed, but fairly stout, pale bill
Inhabits treetops

Adult male:

Red plumage, brightest on underparts
Reddish wings and tail

Adult female:

Orange-yellow underparts
Olive back
Gray wings and tail
Immature plumage similar to female

Similar species:

The male Hepatic Tanager can be told from the similar male Summer Tanager by its dark bill and cheeks. Scarlet Tanager has black wings and tail. Female plumage can be told from similar female Hepatic Tanager by the paler cheeks and bill. Female Western Tanager has wing bars. Female Scarlet Tanager has yellower underparts

Scarlet tanager *Piranga olivacea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches
Pointed, but fairly stout bill
Inhabits treetops

Adult male alternate:

Brilliant scarlet red plumage
Shiny black wings and tail
Plumage held in Spring and Summer

Adult female:

Yellow underparts
Olive back
Gray wings and tail with greenish feather edges
Basic and immature plumages similar to female but males often have blacker wings and tails

Similar species:

The male Scarlet Tanager is striking and easily identified. Male Hepatic and Summer Tanagers are entirely red. Female plumages can be told from similar female Summer Tanager by plain yellow, not orange-yellow, underparts. Female Western Tanager has wing bars. Female Hepatic Tanager has more orange underparts and a darker cheek.

Western tanager *Piranga ludoviciana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches
Pointed, but fairly stout, pale bill
Inhabits treetops

Adult male alternate:

Bright red face
Yellow neck, underparts, rump and shoulder
Black back, wings and tail
White wing bar

Adult female:

Yellow head and underparts
Olive-gray back
Gray wings with white wing bars
Basic and immature plumages similar to female

Similar species:

The male Western Tanager is striking and easily identified. Females can be told from other female tanagers by the white wing bars. Female orioles are thinner-billed and longer-tailed.

Olive sparrow *Arremonops rufivirgatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Conical bill

Brown stripes on olive crown

Gray supercilium

Dark eyeline

Plain olive upperparts

Grayish-white underparts

Sexes similar

Juvenile (Summer) buffier than adult with some streaking below

United States range restricted to southern Texas

Similar species:

The Olive Sparrow is the only sparrow with plain olive upperparts. It might be confused with the Green-tailed Towhee but lacks a rusty cap and is much smaller.

Spotted towhee *Pipilo maculatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25? inches

Conical bill

Red eye

Rusty sides

White belly

Buffy undertail coverts

White wing bars and spots on back

Long tail with white outer tail feathers

Male has black head, back, wings and tail-paler in female

Juvenile (Summer) heavily streaked, brown above and buffy below

Frequently feeds on the ground where it noisily scratches for food

Formerly conspecific with Eastern Towhee

Similar species:

The Eastern Towhee is similar to the Spotted Towhee but lacks wing bars and white spots on the back.

Eastern towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25? inches

Conical bill

Red eye (white in southeastern birds)

Rusty sides

White belly

Buffy undertail coverts

White primary bases and tertial edges

Long tail with white outer tail feathers

Male has black head, back, wings and tail-brown in female

Juvenile (Summer) heavily streaked, brown above and buffy below

Frequently feeds on the ground where it noisily scratches for food

Formerly conspecific with Spotted Towhee

Similar species:

The Eastern Towhee is similar to the Spotted Towhee but lacks wing bars and white spots on the back.

Canyon towhee *Pipilo fuscus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25? inches

Conical bill

Dark eye

Rusty crown

Buffy throat

Black ring of spots on breast with central breast spot

Pale gray underparts

Gray-brown upperparts

Rusty undertail coverts

Long tail

Juvenile (Spring to Fall) heavily streaked below

Formerly conspecific with California Towhee

Similar species:

The Canyon Towhee is similar to the California Towhee but has a rusty crown and grayer upperparts. Abert's Towhee is buffier and has a black area around the bill.

California towhee *Pipilo crissalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25? inches

Conical bill

Dark eye

Brown crown

Buffy throat

Black ring of spots on breast

Pale gray underparts

Brown upperparts

Rusty undertail coverts

Long tail

Juvenile (Spring to Fall) heavily streaked below

Formerly conspecific with Canyon Towhee

Similar species:

The Canyon Towhee is similar to the California Towhee but has a rusty crown and grayer upperparts. Abert's Towhee is buffier and has a black area around the bill.

Abert's towhee *Pipilo aberti*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.75 inches

Conical bill

Dark eye

Black area around base of bill

Brown upperparts

Buff underparts

Rusty undertail coverts

Long tail

Juvenile (Spring to Fall) lightly spotted below

Similar species:

Abert's Towhee is similar to California and Canyon Towhees but has a black area around the base of the bill and is buffier overall.

White-collared seedeater *Sporophila torqueola*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.75 inches
Stubby, conical bill
Range restricted to south Texas

Adult male:

Blackish head
Whitish side of neck and underparts
Dark brownish-gray upperparts
White wing bars and base of primaries
Blackish wings and tail

Adult female:

Buffy-brown upperparts
Buffy underparts
White wing bars and primary patch

Similar species:

The White-collared Seedeater has a short, powerful, conical bill that distinguishes it from similarly-sized birds.

Rufous-winged sparrow *Aimophila carpalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches

Yellowish, conical bill

Rusty crown

Grayish face and supercilium

Brown streak extends behind eye

Brown back with darker streaks

Rusty wings, especially shoulder

Underparts pale gray

Long, brown tail

Sexes similar

Juvenile (Spring and Summer) has brown, streaked crown, dark cheeks and buffy breast with diffuse streaks

Inhabits desert grasslands in southern Arizona

Similar species:

The Rufous-winged Sparrow can be told from the Rufous-crowned Sparrow by its rusty shoulder, paler underparts, thinner malar streak and different song. Other sparrows with rusty crowns (Chipping, Field, American Tree, Swamp) are smaller with different markings.

Cassin's sparrow *Aimophila cassinii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Large, gray, conical bill

Brown crown

Grayish face, lores and supercilium

Brown streak extends behind eye

Gray back and wings with brown streaks

Underparts pale, darkest on breast

Faint dark streaks on flanks

Long, brown tail with paler, barred central tail feathers and a pale outer border

Sexes similar

Juvenile (Spring and Summer) buffier, streaked on breast

Similar species:

The Botteri's Sparrow is very similar to the Cassin's Sparrow and is best identified by its different song. It has a somewhat larger bill and flatter head than the Cassin's. Cassin's has paler central tail feathers with dark barring, pale outer border to the tail, and faint dark streaks on the flanks. Bachman's Sparrow similar but has different range, song and favors more wooded habitats.

Bachman's sparrow *Aimophila aestivalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Conical bill with pale lower mandible

Brown crown

Pale face, lores and supercilium

Brown streak extends behind eye

Gray back and wings with brown streaks

Underparts pale, darkest on breast

Long, brown tail

Birds from western part of range have much rustier upperparts

Sexes similar

Juvenile (Spring to Fall) buffier, streaked on breast

Similar species:

The Bachman's Sparrow is very similar to Botteri's and Cassin's Sparrows but their ranges do not overlap. They have different songs and different habitat preferences with the Bachman's Sparrow inhabiting open woods with a grassy, shrubby understory and Cassin's and Botteri's preferring more open habitats. Cassin's has barred central tail feathers and a few streaks on the flanks.

Botteri's sparrow *Aimophila botterii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Large, gray, conical bill

Brown crown

Grayish face, lores and supercilium

Brown streak extends behind eye

Gray back and wings with brown streaks

Underparts pale, darkest on breast

Long, brown tail

Birds from western part of range have browner plumage

Sexes similar

Juvenile (Spring to Fall) buffier, streaked on breast

Similar species:

The Botteri's Sparrow is very similar to the Cassin's Sparrow and is best identified by its different song. It has a somewhat larger bill and flatter head than the Cassin's. Cassin's has paler central tail feathers with dark barring, pale outer border to the tail, and faint dark streaks on the flanks. Bachman's Sparrow also very similar but has different range, song and favors more wooded habitats.

Rufous-crowned sparrow *Aimophila ruficeps*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches

Yellowish, conical bill

Rusty crown

Grayish face and supercilium

Brown streak extends behind eye

Thick black malar streak

Brown back with darker streaks

Brown wings

Underparts gray

Long, brown tail

Sexes similar

Juvenile (Spring to Fall) has brown crown and diffuse streaks on breast and flanks

Similar species:

The Rufous-winged Sparrow can be told from the Rufous-crowned Sparrow by its rusty shoulder, paler underparts, thinner malar streak and different song. Other sparrows with rusty crowns (Chipping, Field, American Tree) are smaller, lack the dark malar streak and have wing bars.

American tree sparrow *Spizella arborea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches

Dark, conical bill with yellow lower mandible

Rusty crown and eyeline

Gray supercilium and face

Gray breast with black spot

Rust patch at side of breast

White belly and undertail coverts

Buffy flanks

Tan back with dark streaks

Brown wings with wing bars

Slim, forked tail

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer) similar to immature but duller with streaked breast

Similar species:

American Tree Sparrows are similar to other sparrows with rusty crowns but have a black spot on the breast. Chipping Sparrow has a white supercilium and black eye line. Field Sparrow has a pink bill and white eye ring. Swamp Sparrow has rusty wings and a dingy breast.

Chipping sparrow *Spizella passerina*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Dark, conical bill

Rusty crown

White supercilium and black eyeline

Gray face and underparts

Tan back with dark streaks

Brown wings with wing bars

Gray rump

Slim, forked tail

Sexes similar

Fall and Winter plumage has different head pattern: brown crown with fine dark streaks and pale median crown stripe, buff supercilium, pale bill with dark tip and brownish cheeks

Juvenile plumage (Summer and Fall) similar to Winter but duller with streaked underparts

Similar species:

Chipping Sparrows are similar to other sparrows with rusty crowns but have a white supercilium and black eye line in Spring and Summer. Field Sparrow has a pink bill and white eye ring. Swamp Sparrow has rusty wings and a dingy breast. American Tree Sparrow has a dark breast spot. In Fall and Winter, Chipping Sparrows are quite similar to Clay-colored and Brewer's Sparrows. Often, they retain some rust in the crown and can be identified by that field mark. Clay-colored and Brewer's Sparrows have pale lores and brown rumps. Clay-colored Sparrow has more distinct whisker and a buffier breast. Brewer's Sparrow has an indistinct supercilium and an eye ring.

Clay-colored sparrow *Spizella pallida*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Pale, conical bill with dark tip

Brown crown with dark streaks and pale central stripe

White supercilium

Brown cheeks bordered by black

Pale malar streak with dark whisker

Gray hindneck

Pale underparts

Tan back with dark streaks

Brown wings with wing bars

Brown rump

Slim, forked tail

Sexes similar

Immature plumage (Fall) similar to adult but has buffy breast, malar streak and supercilium

Juvenile plumage (Summer) similar to immature but duller with streaked underparts

Similar species:

In Spring and Summer, Clay-colored Sparrows are similar to Brewer's Sparrows but have a white central crown stripe, dark borders to the cheeks, distinct supercilium, gray hindneck and a dark whisker. Field Sparrow has a pink bill, rusty crown and a white eye ring. In Fall and Winter, Chipping Sparrows are quite similar to Clay-colored Sparrows. Often, they retain some rust in the crown and can be identified by that field mark. Clay-colored Sparrows have pale lores, brown rumps, more distinct whisker and a buffier breast.

Brewer's sparrow *Spizella breweri*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Pale, conical bill with dark tip

Brown crown with dark streaks

Indistinct supercilium

White eye ring

Brown cheeks

Pale underparts

Tan back with dark streaks

Brown wings with wing bars

Brown rump

Slim, forked tail

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer) similar to adult but duller with streaked underparts

Similar species:

Clay-colored Sparrows are similar to Brewer's Sparrows but have a white central crown stripe, dark borders to the cheeks, distinct supercilium, gray hindneck and a dark whisker. Field Sparrow has a pink bill, rusty crown and a white eye ring. In Fall and Winter, Chipping Sparrows are quite similar to Brewer's Sparrows. Often, they retain some rust in the crown and can be identified by that field mark. Brewer's Sparrows have pale lores, brown rumps, white eye ring and a plainer face pattern.

Field sparrow *Spizella pusilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Pink, conical bill

Rusty crown and eyeline (behind eye)

White eye ring

Gray (Summer) or buff (Winter) face

Buff breast

White belly and undertail coverts

Tan back with dark streaks

Brown wings with wing bars

Slim, forked tail

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer) similar to adult but duller with streaked breast

Similar species:

The pink bill, rusty crown, and white eye ring of the Field Sparrow are distinctive.

Black-chinned sparrow *Spizella atrogularis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches

Pink, conical bill

Black throat

Gray head and body

Tan back with dark streaks

Brown wings

Slim, forked tail

Female lacks black throat

Juvenile plumage (Summer) similar to adult but has brownish wash

Similar species:

The gray coloration of the Black-chinned Sparrow is similar to juncos but note the brown back and wings and lack of white outer tail feathers.

Vesper sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Conical bill

Long, dark tail with white outer feathers

White eye ring

Rusty lesser coverts (not always visible)

Brown upperparts with dark streaks

White underparts with dark streaks

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer) somewhat darker

Found in open fields

Forages on the ground

Male often sings from high perch (tree, telephone wire, e.g.)

Similar species:

When flushed, the white outer tail feathers of the Vesper Sparrow are easy to observe. Other birds with this field mark are American Pipit, Horned Lark, Lark Sparrow and longspurs. All lack the heavily streaked breast of the Vesper Sparrow. When perched, the Vesper Sparrow looks similar to several other species of sparrows. Savannah has a yellow supercilium, pale central crown stripe, shorter tail and lacks rusty shoulder and eye ring. Song has rounded tail, breast spot, and lacks rusty shoulder and eye ring. Lincoln's has a buffy breast. Baird's and juvenile Grasshopper are larger-headed and shorter-tailed.

Lark sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Conical bill

Distinctive head pattern: chestnut crown and cheeks, white supercilium, crown stripe, eye ring and throat, black eyeline and malar streak

Gray-brown upperparts with dark streaks on back

Whitish breast with black spot

Long tail with white outer corners

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer) similar to adult but duller with streaked breast

Similar species:

Adults are very distinctive with their bold face patterns and black spot on the breast.

Juveniles have enough of the face pattern of the adults to be identifiable.

Black-throated sparrow *Amphispiza bilineata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Dark, conical bill

Black throat and mask

White supercilium and malar streak

Gray crown, back and wings

White belly

Long, black tail with small amount of white on outer tail feathers and outer corner

Sexes similar

Juvenile (Spring to Fall) much browner, streaked below with faint adult face pattern, white throat

Similar species:

The Black-throated sparrow is very distinctive. Somewhat similar Sage and Five-striped Sparrows have white throats. Juveniles similar to juvenile Sage Sparrow but has brighter supercilium

Sage sparrow *Amphispiza belli*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Dark, conical bill

White supraloral spot

Broken eye ring

White throat with black whisker

Gray crown, back and wings

Dark streaks on back (variable)

White underparts with blurry streaks on flanks and dark spot on breast

Long, dark tail with small amount of white on outer tail feathers

Birds from California have darker upperparts

Sexes similar

Juvenile (Spring to Fall) much browner, streaked below with faint adult face pattern

Similar species:

The Black-throated sparrow somewhat similar but has black throat. Juvenile similar to juvenile Black-throated Sparrow but has indistinct supercilium. Local (southeastern Arizona) Five-striped Sparrow has gray breast and flanks and black malar streak.

Lark bunting *Calamospiza melanocorys*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches
Large, pale bill
White wing patch

Adult male alternate:

Black plumage
Large wing patch

Adult female:

Brownish head with pale supercilium
Brown streaked back
White underparts with heavy streaking
Blackish wings with brown edges and white wing patch
Basic and immature plumages similar to female

Similar species:

The male Lark Bunting is readily identifiable. Female-type plumage is somewhat similar to various sparrows and female finches but has a white wing patch and a large, pale bill.

Savannah sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Conical bill

Short, forked tail

Yellow to whitish supercilium

Thin, white central crown stripe

Brown upperparts (varies from dark brown to gray-brown) with dark streaks

White underparts with dark streaks

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer) somewhat darker

Found in open fields with fairly short vegetation

Forages on the ground

Variation in plumage and size across its range

Similar species:

In its open country habitat, the Savannah Sparrow is most similar to Vesper and Song Sparrows. It can be told from both by its yellowish supercilium, white central crown stripe and short tail. Baird's and juvenile Grasshopper Sparrow are larger-headed and billed. When flushed, the Savannah Sparrow tends to fly fairly high to its next perch whereas Song Sparrows fly low and pump their tails, Vesper Sparrows often show considerable white in the tail and Grasshopper Sparrows fly very low.

Grasshopper sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Large, conical bill

Large, flat head

Short tail

Buffy face and breast

White belly and undertail coverts

Buffy supercilium

Narrow, whitish crown stripe

Gray and brown streaks on nape, wing coverts and rump

Black and white streaking on back

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer, sometimes Fall) similar to adult but has fine streaks on breast

Some variation in plumage across range with Florida birds being somewhat darker and Arizona birds having indistinct brownish streaks on sides of breast

Found in open fields

Forages on the ground

Similar species:

The Baird's Sparrow is similar in shape to the Grasshopper Sparrow but has streaks across the breast. Juvenile Grasshopper Sparrows have streaked breasts and can be separated by their whitish, not yellow, crown stripe and lack of dark streaks on the side of the throat. Henslow's Sparrow has olive face and rusty wings. LeConte's Sparrow has different face pattern. Other sparrows likely to be found in field habitats have longer tails and smaller heads as well as different markings (Song, Vesper, Savannah, Field, for example).

Baird's sparrow *Ammodramus bairdii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Large, conical bill

Large, flat head

Short, forked tail

Dull yellow face, crown patch and nape

White throat with two dark streaks at side

Brown upperparts with dark streaks

White underparts with dark streaks on breast and sides

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer, sometimes Fall) buffier below and scallier above

Found in open fields

Forages on the ground

Similar species:

The Baird's Sparrow can be told from the similarly-shaped juvenile Grasshopper Sparrow by its yellowish crown stripe and dark streaks at the side of the throat. Vesper and Song Sparrows have rounder heads and longer tails and also lack the yellowish face. Savannah Sparrow has a smaller head and bill, more extensive streaking below and yellow on the face confined to the supercilium. Henslow's Sparrow has an olive face.

Henslow's sparrow *Ammodramus henslowii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches

Large, conical bill

Large, flat head

Short tail

Olive face

Two dark whiskers

Buffy streaked breast and sides

White belly and undertail coverts

Narrow, whitish crown stripe

Rusty wing coverts

Dark and light streaking on back

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer, sometimes Fall) similar to adult but has fine streaks confined to sides of breast

Found in open fields with tall herbaceous vegetation

Similar species:

The Henslow's Sparrow can be told from other sparrows by its olive face and rusty wings.

LeConte's sparrow *Ammodramus leconteii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches

Large, conical bill

Large, flat head

Short tail

Orange face surrounding gray cheek

Black eye line becoming T-shaped behind eye

Black crown with narrow, whitish crown stripe

Gray nape with purple streaks

Buffy breast and sides

Sides finely streaked

White belly and undertail coverts

Brown wing coverts

Dark and light streaking on back

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer, sometimes Fall) similar to adult but duller without nape patch and with buff central crown stripe

Found in marshes and fields

Similar species:

The LeConte's Sparrow is similar to the Sharp-tailed Sparrows but has a white central crown stripe and purplish streaks on the nape.

Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow *Ammodramus nelsoni*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5? inches

Large, conical bill

Large, flat head

Short tail

Orange face surrounding gray cheek

Orange throat

Gray crown and nape

Buffy breast and sides with indistinct streaks

White belly and undertail coverts

Brown wing coverts

Dark and light streaking on back

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer, sometimes Fall) similar to adult but has buffier underparts with less streaking and browner, not gray, upperparts

Found in marshes and occasionally fields (migration)

Until recently, considered conspecific with Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow

Similar species:

The Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow is similar to the Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow but has a white throat separated from the orange face by a dark streak (uniformly orange in Nelson's) and more streaking on the breast. LeConte's Sparrow has a white central crown stripe and purplish streaks on the nape. Juvenile Seaside Sparrow is similar to Juvenile Nelson's but has a larger bill and a broken supercilium.

Saltmarsh sharp-tailed sparrow *Ammodramus cauducutus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5? inches

Large, conical bill

Large, flat head

Short tail

Orange face surrounding gray cheek

White throat

Gray crown and nape

Buffy breast and sides with dark streaks

White belly and undertail coverts

Brown wing coverts

Dark and light streaking on back

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer, sometimes Fall) similar to adult but has buffier underparts with less streaking and browner, not gray, upperparts

Found in coastal marshes

Until recently, considered conspecific with Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow

Similar species:

The Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow is similar to the Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow but has a white throat separated from the orange face by a dark streak (uniformly orange in Nelson's) and more streaking on the breast. LeConte's Sparrow has a white central crown stripe and purplish streaks on the nape. Juvenile Seaside Sparrow is similar to Juvenile Saltmarsh but has a larger bill and a broken supercilium.

Seaside sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Large, conical bill

Large, flat head

Short tail

Yellow lores

White throat with dark streak

Dark gray plumage with indistinct streaks on breast

Sexes similar

Juvenile plumage (Summer) similar to adult but has buffier underparts with less streaking and browner, not gray, upperparts

Found in coastal marshes

Some races are blacker and streakier underneath

Similar species:

Adults are fairly distinctive with gray plumage and yellow lores. Juveniles are similar to juvenile sharp-tailed sparrows but have larger bills and a broken supercilium.

Fox sparrow *Passerella iliaca*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches
Conical bill with yellow lower mandible
Very large sparrow
Thick malar streak
Heavy spotting below
Extremely variable plumage across range
Sexes similar

Eastern United States:

Gray crown, nape and back
Bright rusty rump and tail
Rusty brown cheeks, malar streak, streaks on back, wings and spotting below

Western United States:

Dark brown to gray upperparts
Wings and tail sometimes same color as back, sometimes browner
Bill size very large in one race
Spotting underneath usually very dark

Similar species:

The Fox Sparrow is much larger than other sparrows and might at first be mistaken for a thrush but note the thick, conical bill.

Song sparrow *Melospiza melodia*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Conical bill

Brown crown

Grayish face and supercilium

Brown streak extends behind eye

Thick malar streak

Brown back with darker streaks

Brown wings with some rust

Underparts white with heavy dark streaks and central breast spot

Long, brown, rounded tail

Sexes similar

Juvenile (Summer) similar to adult but buffier

Considerable variation in plumage across its range from dark to rusty upperparts and in bill size and shape

Similar species:

The Song Sparrow can be told from the Lincoln's Sparrow by its larger bill, heavier streaking on the breast and flanks, lack of buffy color on the breast and face, brown back, larger size and longer tail. Juvenile Song Sparrows are very similar to juvenile Swamp and Lincoln's Sparrows. Savannah Sparrow is similar but smaller-billed and shorter-tailed with a yellowish supercilium. Fox Sparrow is much larger.

Lincoln's sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.75 inches

Conical bill

Brown crown with gray central stripe

Gray face and supercilium

Eye ring

Brown streak extends behind eye

Thick malar streak bordered by white throat and buff submustachial stripe

Olive back with darker streaks

Brownish-olive wings

Buffy breast and flanks with fine streaks

White belly

Thin, rounded tail

Sexes similar

Juvenile (Summer) similar to adult but is buffier

Similar species:

The Song Sparrow can be told from the Lincoln's Sparrow by its larger bill, heavier streaking on the breast and flanks, lack of buffy color on the breast and face, brown back, larger size and longer tail. Juvenile Lincoln's Sparrows are very similar to juvenile Swamp and Song Sparrows. Savannah Sparrow is similar but has a yellowish supercilium and lacks a buffy breast. Swamp Sparrow has a rusty crown, rusty wings and much less streaking on the breast.

Swamp sparrow *Melospiza georgiana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Conical bill

Rusty crown-solid in Summer, streaked in Winter

Gray face and supercilium

Black streak extends behind eye

White throat with dark malar streak

Black and buff streaked back

Rusty wings

Gray breast

Buffy flanks with indistinct streaks

Whitish belly

Thin, rounded tail

Sexes similar

Face generally browner in Winter

Juvenile (Summer) similar to adult but is buffier and streakier underneath

Similar species:

The Swamp Sparrow is similar in size and habitat to the Song and Lincoln's Sparrows but has rusty wings and lacks extensive dark streaks across the breast. Other sparrows with rusty crowns are paler underneath lacking buffy flanks, rusty wings or blurry streaks on the flanks. Juvenile Swamp Sparrows are very similar to juvenile Lincoln's and Song Sparrows.

White-throated sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches
Large sparrow
Dark conical bill
Long slightly forked tail
Pink legs

Alternate:

Bold black and white (or tan) head stripes
Yellow lores
White throat contrasting with gray breast and cheeks
Brown back with dark streaks
Brown wings with two white wingbars
Whitish belly

Basic and Juvenile:

Similar to alternate but duller
Blurry streaks on breast and flanks
Stripes on head tan and brown
Indistinct yellow lores

Similar species:

In spring, the bold head stripes and yellow lores are diagnostic. In fall, these features may be less noticeable. The contrasting white throat and dark bill separate it from the White-crowned Sparrow. Swamp Sparrow has rusty wings and is smaller.

Harris's sparrow *Zonotrichia querula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches

Pink, conical bill

Black patch around base of bill from crown onto breast

Gray face in summer, tan in winter

White underparts with streaked sides

Tan back with dark streaks

Brown wings with wing bars

Long tail

Sexes similar

Immature plumage (Fall and Winter) similar to adult but has white throat and black flecked crown

Juvenile plumage (Summer) similar to immature but has streakier breast

Similar species:

Adults are very distinctive with their bold face pattern. Juveniles and immatures can be identified by their pink bills, streaked sides and blackish crowns.

White-crowned sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Pink, conical bill (yellow in some populations)

Black and white head stripes

Gray face and underparts

Tan back with dark streaks

Brown wings with wing bars

Long tail

Sexes similar

Immature plumage (Fall and Winter) similar to adult but has brown and gray head stripes

Juvenile plumage (Summer) similar to immature but duller with streaked breast

Similar species:

Adults are only likely to be confused with the White-throated Sparrow. White-throated Sparrow has white throat contrasting with the gray breast, yellow lores and a dark bill.

Immature Golden-crowned Sparrow lacks head stripes and is darker.

Golden-crowned sparrow *Zonotrichia atricapilla*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches

Dark, conical bill with pale lower mandible

Broad black supercilium and yellow crown

Gray face and underparts

Tan back with dark streaks

Brown wings with wing bars

Long tail

Sexes similar

Winter adult duller with less obvious head pattern

Immature plumage (Fall and Winter) similar to adult but has plain head pattern with just a hint of the golden crown (variable)

Juvenile plumage (Summer) similar to immature but duller with streaked breast

Similar species:

Adults are unlikely to be confused with other species. Immatures are larger than most sparrows and lack the head patterns of the similarly-sized White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows.

Dark-eyed junco *Junco hyemalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25-6 inches
Pink, conical bill
White outer tail feathers
Considerable geographic variation in plumage
Various forms were formerly considered separate species

White-winged junco:

Medium gray head, breast and upperparts
White belly
White wing bars
Female and immatures somewhat browner than male

Oregon junco:

Dark gray head and breast
Brown back and wings
Buffy flanks
White belly
Female and immatures somewhat duller than male

Slate-colored junco:

Dark gray head, breast and upperparts
White belly
Female and immatures somewhat browner than adult male and may have buffy flanks

Pink-sided junco:

Medium gray head and breast
Dark lores
Brown back and wings
Pinkish flanks
White belly
Female and immatures somewhat browner than male

Gray-headed junco:

Medium gray plumage, palest on belly

Rusty back

Dark lores

Sometimes has dark upper mandible

Similar species:

The Dark-eyed Junco is similar to the local (southeast Arizona) Yellow-eyed Junco but has dark eyes. Black-chinned sparrow has streaked back, brown wings and lacks white in the tail.

Yellow-eyed junco *Junco phaeonotus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches

Conical bill with dark upper mandible

Yellow eyes

Dark lores

Gray head and breast

Rusty back

White outer tail feathers

United States range restricted to southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico

Similar species:

The Dark-eyed Junco is similar to the local (southeast Arizona) Yellow-eyed Junco but has dark eyes. Black-chinned sparrow has streaked back, brown wings and lacks white in the tail.

McCown's longspur *Calcarius mccownii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches

Large, conical bill

Black-tipped tail with white base

Found in open areas: beaches, tundra, short grass or bare fields

Often found in flocks

Forages on the ground

Male alternate:

Black crown and breast

Gray face and nape

Whitish throat and underparts

Rusty shoulder

Black breast and belly

Streaked back

Female and basic:

Dark crown

Pale supercilium

Pale underparts

Rusty shoulder

Streaked back

Sometimes has faint blackish breast

Similar species:

In the breeding season, the male McCown's Longspur is easily identified. The female and winter plumages are very similar to other longspurs. Smith's and Lapland have less white in the tail, especially at the base. McCown's has a rusty shoulder and a larger bill.

Chestnut-collared often has a hint of chestnut on the nape. Lapland Longspur has rusty wings. McCown's Longspur can be told from Snow Buntings and Horned Larks by its streaked upperparts.

Lapland longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Short, conical bill

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Found in open areas: beaches, tundra, short grass or bare fields

Often found in flocks

Forages on the ground

Male alternate:

Black crown, face, and throat bordered by white

Chestnut nape

Streaked back

White underparts with black streaks on flanks

Yellow bill

Female in alternate plumage has semblance of male's face and throat pattern

Basic:

Tan supercilium and cheek patch

Cheek patch has dark border

Dark, streaked crown

Brownish wash to breast with streaks

Rusty wing coverts

Streaked back

Similar species:

In the breeding season, Lapland Longspurs are easily identified by their distinctive head pattern. In winter, they are often found in flocks with Snow Buntings or Horned Larks.

They can be easily separated from those species by their streaked backs, rusty wings and face pattern. They are quite similar to the other longspur species. The Lapland Longspur has the least amount of white in the tail of any of the longspurs and is the only one with rusty wing coverts.

Smith's longspur *Calcarius pictus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches

Short, conical bill

Black tail with white outer tail feathers

Found in open areas: beaches, tundra, short grass or bare fields

Often found in flocks

Forages on the ground

Male alternate:

Black crown and face with white supercilium and cheek spot

Yellow throat, nape and underparts

Streaked back

Female and basic:

Dark crown and cheek outline

Pale supercilium and face

Buff, streaked underparts

White shoulder (not always visible)

Brown wings

Streaked back

Similar species:

In the breeding season, the male Smith's Longspur is easily identified. The female and winter plumages are very similar to other longspurs. When seen, the white shoulder is diagnostic. McCown's and Chestnut-collared have more white in the tail, especially at the base. McCown's has less streaking on the underparts. McCown's, Chestnut-collared and Lapland sometimes show dark areas on the breast that are lacking in the Smith's. Lapland Longspur has rusty wings. Smith's Longspur can be told from Snow Buntings and Horned Larks by its streaked upperparts and buff underparts.

Chestnut-collared longspur *Calcarius ornatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches
Short, conical bill
Black-tipped tail with white base
Found in open areas: beaches, tundra, short grass or bare fields
Often found in flocks
Forages on the ground

Male alternate:

Black crown and eyeline
White supercilium
Yellow throat
Chestnut nape
Black breast and belly
White undertail coverts
Streaked back

Female and basic:

Dark crown
Pale brown supercilium and face
Buffy underparts
Brown wings
Streaked back
Hint of chestnut nape sometimes visible
Winter male often has blackish breast

Similar species:

In the breeding season, the male Chestnut-collared Longspur is easily identified. The female and winter plumages are very similar to other longspurs. Smith's and Lapland have less white in the tail, especially at the base. McCown's has a rusty shoulder and a larger bill. Chestnut-collared often has a blackish breast and hint of chestnut on the nape which are lacking in the Smith's. Lapland Longspur has rusty wings. Chestnut-collared Longspur can be told from Snow Buntings and Horned Larks by its streaked upperparts and buff underparts.

Snow bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches
Short, conical bill
Large white patches in wings
Inhabits open areas: tundra, beaches, barren fields, etc
Often found in flocks
Feeds on the ground
Distinctive call note given in flight

Male alternate:

White head and underparts
Black back and bill
Black wings and tail with some white patches
Plumage worn on the breeding grounds in the Arctic

Female alternate:

White head with some dark streaking
White underparts
Upperparts streaked black and gray
Black wings and tail with some white patches
Plumage worn on the breeding grounds in the Arctic

Basic:

Variable amounts of brown on head, back and sides of breast
Dark streaks on back
White underparts
Yellow bill
Plumage worn in Winter and during migration

Similar species:

The Snow Bunting is easiest to identify in flight with its large white wing patches and distinctive calls. On the ground, it is whiter than other species that occupy a similar habitat. In Alaska, McKay's Bunting is similar but has a white back.

McKay's bunting *Plectrophenax hyperboreus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches
Short, conical bill
White wings with black tips and tertials
United States ranges restricted to Alaska

Male alternate:

White head, back and underparts
Black and white wings and tail
Black bill
Female similar to male but back is spotted with black

Basic:

Variable amounts of brown on head
Mostly white plumage

Similar species:

In Alaska, McKay's Bunting is similar to the Snow Bunting but has a white back.

Northern cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.75 inches
Large, conical bill
Crest
Long tail

Adult male:

Bright red plumage, dullest on back and wings
Black around base of bill
Red bill

Adult female:

Reddish crest, wings and tail
Brownish-gray upperparts
Buffy underparts
Red bill
Juvenile like adult female but has dark bill and crest

Similar species:

The male Northern Cardinal is unmistakable. Females and juveniles are similar to Pyrrhuloxia but Pyrrhuloxia has a yellow bill with a curved culmen and is grayer, less brown.

Pyrrhuloxia Cardinalis sinuatus

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches
Large, conical bill with curved culmen
Crest
Long tail

Adult male:

Red crest, wings, tail, face and parts of breast
Remainder of plumage gray
Yellow bill

Adult female:

Reddish crest, wings and tail
Brownish-gray upperparts
Gray underparts
Yellow bill
Juvenile like adult female but has dark bill

Similar species:

Pyrrhuloxias are similar to Northern Cardinals but Pyrrhuloxias have a yellow bill with a curved culmen and are grayer, less brown.

Rose-breasted grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25 inches
Large, conical, pale bill

Adult male:

Rosy-red, triangular breast patch
Black head and upperparts
White underparts
White patches in wing
White spots in black tail
Rosy-red wing linings
Male in Fall and Winter is duller, browner
Immature male similar to adult male in Fall and Winter but duller

Adult female:

Black and white crown stripes
White underparts with extensive streaking
Dark gray upperparts
Yellow to yellowish-orange wing linings
Immature female similar to adult female
Juvenile has buffy breast

Similar species:

Female-plumaged Black-headed Grosbeak is very similar to female-plumaged Rose-breasted Grosbeak but has buffier breast and has streaking confined to the sides.

Black-headed grosbeak *Pheucticus melanocephalus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25 inches

Large, conical bill

Yellow wing linings

Adult male:

Deep orange breast, collar and underparts

Black head and upperparts

White undertail coverts

White wing bars and wing patches

White spots in black tail

Male in Fall and Winter is duller, browner

Adult female:

Black and white crown stripes

Buff underparts with streaking at the sides

Dark gray upperparts

Immature plumages similar to adult female

Similar species:

Female-plumaged Black-headed Grosbeak is very similar to female-plumaged Rose-breasted Grosbeak but has buffier breast and has streaking confined to the sides.

Blue bunting *Cyanocompsa parellina*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches
Small, conical bill
Rare stray to Texas and Louisiana

Male:

Deep blue plumage (in poor light appears black)
Blackish wings and tail with blue edges

Female:

Dark brown upperparts
Warm brown underparts

Similar species:

The Blue Bunting is very similar to the Indigo Bunting but is a deeper blue and has a larger bill. Females very similar. Blue Grosbeak similar but has brown wing bars.

Blue grosbeak *Guiraca caerulea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches
Large, conical bill
Broad, brown wing bars
Occasionally wags tail

Adult male:

Deep blue plumage (in poor light appears black)
Black around base of bill
Blackish wings and tail

Adult female:

Dark brown upperparts
Warm brown underparts with faint dark streaks
Blackish wings and tail
Immature plumages similar to adult female

Similar species:

The Blue Grosbeak is very similar to the Indigo Bunting but is larger with brown wing bars.

Lazuli bunting *Passerina amoena*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, conical bill
White wing bars

Adult male:

Deep blue head and upperparts
Orange breast
White belly and undertail coverts
Blackish wings and tail

Adult female:

Dark brown upperparts
Warm brown underparts
Immature plumages similar to adult female-immature male can have blue patches

Similar species:

The male Lazuli Bunting is distinctive. Females can be told from other female buntings by the white wing bars.

Indigo bunting *Passerina cyanea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, conical bill

Adult male alternate:

Deep blue plumage (in poor light appears black)
Blackish wings and tail with blue edges
Basic-plumaged male (Fall and Winter) similar to adult female but often has some blue feathers

Adult female:

Dark brown upperparts
Warm brown underparts with faint dark streaks
Indistinct wing bars
Immature plumages similar to adult female-immature male can have blue patches

Similar species:

The Blue Grosbeak is very similar to the Indigo Bunting but is larger with brown wing bars. Female Indigo Buntings are similar to other female buntings. Female Lazuli Bunting has white wing bars. Female Varied Bunting very similar but has more curved culmen and lacks streaking below. Female Painted Bunting greener. Sparrows have more patterned faces and streaked backs.

Varied bunting *Passerina versicolor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, conical bill with curved culmen

Adult male:

Black around base of bill
Dark purple plumage-can appear black in poor light
Dark blue areas on head and rump
Dark red nape
Blackish wings and tail

Adult female:

Brown plumage-paler below
Immature plumages similar to adult female

Similar species:

The male Varied Bunting is distinctive in good light. Females are very similar to other female buntings but can be identified by their more curved culmen. Female Lazuli Bunting has white wing bars.

Painted bunting *Passerina ciris*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.5 inches
Small, conical bill

Adult male:

Blue head
Red underparts, rump and eye ring
Green back
Dark red nape
Blackish wings and tail

Adult female:

Unmarked green upperparts
Greenish-yellow underparts

Similar species:

The male Painted Bunting is easy to identify. Females are greener than other female buntings.

Dickcissel *Spiza americana*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches
Large, pale bill
Rusty shoulder patch

Adult male:

Gray crown, cheek and nape
Yellow and white supercilium and malar streak
White chin, black throat and yellow breast
Grayish-white belly and undertail coverts
Gray-brown back with black streaks
Black wings with gray-brown edges

Adult female:

Gray-brown crown, cheek and nape
Yellow and white supercilium and malar streak
Grayish-white underparts
Buffy streaked flanks
Gray-brown back with black streaks
Black wings with gray-brown edges
Immatures similar to female but duller.

Similar species:

The male Dickcissel is similar in pattern to the meadowlark but is much smaller with a thicker bill. The female Dickcissel is similar to the female House Sparrow but has larger, pale bill. Often, the female or immature Dickcissel has yellow in the face, rusty shoulders or streaked flanks that the House Sparrow lacks.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches
Short, conical bill
Frequents open habitats
Often found in large flocks in migration

Adult male alternate:

Black head, underparts, back, wings and tail
Yellow nape
White scapulars and rump
Plumage held in Spring and Summer

Female and basic:

Buff and black head stripes
Buff underparts with black streaking on flanks
Buff upperparts with black streaks on back
Dark wings and tail with pale edging
Juvenile similar to basic

Similar species:

The male Bobolink is similar to the male Lark Bunting but has a yellow nape, white rump, and lacks a white wing patch. The female Bobolink is similar to the Grasshopper Sparrow but is larger and has streaked flanks. Female Red-winged Blackbird has a streaked breast.

Red-winged blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25 inches

Sharply-pointed bill

Frequents marshy habitats in summer, open habitats at other times of year

Often flocks with other species of blackbirds

Adult male:

Bright red patch on wings bordered by yellow (border missing in some races)

Black plumage

Immature male similar to adult male but has pale supercilium and brown edges to black feathers

Adult female:

Pale supercilium

Heavily streaked underparts

Upperparts brown and white

Sometimes has yellow tinge to face and throat

Females very dark in some races

Juveniles similar to adult females

Similar species:

The male Red-winged Blackbird can be told from the male Tricolored Blackbird by its yellowish, not white, border to the red shoulder patch. Females are quite similar but Tricoloreds typically have darker bellies. Tricolored Blackbirds are only found in Oregon and California. Other species of blackbirds lack the red shoulder patch of the male and the streaked underparts of the female.

Tricolored blackbird *Agelaius tricolor*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches

Sharply-pointed bill

Frequents marshy habitats in summer, open habitats at other times of year

Often flocks with other species of blackbirds

Adult male:

Bright red patch on wings bordered by white

Black plumage

Immature male similar to female but has red shoulder

Adult female:

Pale supercilium

Heavily streaked breast

Belly dark

Upperparts black and white

Sometimes has yellow tinge to face and throat

Immature female similar to adult female

Similar species:

The male Red-winged Blackbird can be told from the male Tricolored Blackbird by its yellowish, not white, border to the red shoulder patch. Females are quite similar but Tricoloreds typically have darker bellies. Other species of blackbirds lack the red shoulder patch of the male and the streaked underparts of the female.

Eastern meadowlark *Sturnella magna*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches
Sharply-pointed bill
Buff and black head stripes
Yellow underparts with black v on breast
White flanks with black streaks
Brown upperparts with black streaks
Brown tail with white outer tail feathers
Juvenile and winter plumages somewhat duller
Frequents open habitats

Similar species:

The Eastern Meadowlark is very similar to the Western Meadowlark. Where their ranges overlap, they are best separated by voice. Western Meadowlark has yellow throat extending slightly farther into face than Eastern. Male Dickcissel is much smaller with a conical bill and lacks white in the tail.

Western meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches
Sharply-pointed bill
Buff and brown head stripes
Yellow underparts with black v on breast
White flanks with black streaks
Brown upperparts with black streaks
Brown tail with white outer tail feathers
Juvenile and winter plumages somewhat duller
Frequents open habitats

Similar species:

The Eastern Meadowlark is very similar to the Western Meadowlark. Where their ranges overlap, they are best separated by voice. Western Meadowlark has yellow throat extending slightly farther into face than Eastern. Male Dickcissel is much smaller with a conical bill and lacks white in the tail.

Yellow-headed blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches

Sharply-pointed bill

Frequents marshy habitats in summer, open habitats at other times of year

Often flocks with other species of blackbirds

Adult male:

Bright yellow head and breast

Black from eye to bill

Black body, wings and tail

White patch in wing

Adult female:

Yellow supercilium, throat and breast-not as bright as male

White streaks extend down breast

Remainder of plumage gray-brown

Juveniles similar to adult females

Similar species:

The male Yellow-headed Blackbird is diagnostic. Female Yellow-headed Blackbirds can be told from other species of blackbirds by the yellow throat and breast.

Rusty blackbird *Euphagus carolinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches
Sharply-pointed bill
Pale eye
Often found in wet wooded areas

Male:

Entirely black plumage in Spring and Summer
Variable amount of brown feather edges in Fall and Winter often with pale supercilium and malar streak

Female:

Breeding plumage similar to male but grayer
Winter plumage similar to male's

Similar species:

Male Rusty Blackbird similar to male Brewer's Blackbird but lacks purple iridescence.
Female Brewer's Blackbird has a dark eye. Grackles are larger with much longer tails.
Cowbirds are smaller with more conical bills.

Brewer's blackbird *Euphagus cyanocephalus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches
Sharply-pointed bill

Male:

Entirely black plumage with purple gloss to head
May have gray edges in Fall and Winter to upperparts and pale supercilium
Pale eye

Female:

Dark eye
Dark gray plumage

Similar species:

Male Rusty Blackbird similar to male Brewer's Blackbird but lacks purple iridescence.
Female Rusty Blackbird has a light eye. Grackles are larger with much longer tails.
Cowbirds are smaller with more conical bills.

Common grackle *Quiscalus quiscula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 10-12 inches
Very long tail
Long bill
Frequently gathers in large flocks

Adult:

Entirely black plumage
Entirely purple or purple and greenish iridescence to plumage
Pale eye

Juvenile:

Dark eye
Dark brown plumage

Similar species:

The Common Grackle is similar to blackbirds but is larger with a much longer tail. Male Great-tailed and Boat-tailed Grackles are similar but larger with longer tails.

Boat-tailed grackle *Quiscalus major*

Identification Tips:

Length: 16 inches

Very long tail

Eyes pale in birds from Atlantic coast, browner in Florida and Gulf Coast populations

Long bill

Frequently gathers in flocks

Most often found in salt marshes (more widespread in Florida)

Male:

Entirely black plumage with purple iridescence

Female:

Buffy supercilium and breast

Remainder of plumage dark brown

Similar species:

The male Boat-tailed Grackle is similar to the Common Grackle but is larger with a much longer tail. Great-tailed and Boat-tailed Grackles are very similar but fortunately have mostly different ranges. Great-tailed Grackles have paler eyes and different calls.

Great-tailed grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Very long tail

Eyes pale

Long bill

Frequently gathers in flocks

Male:

Entirely black plumage with purple iridescence

Female:

Buffy supercilium and breast

Remainder of plumage dark brown

Similar species:

The male Great-tailed Grackle is similar to the Common Grackle but is larger with a much longer tail. Great-tailed and Boat-tailed Grackles are very similar but fortunately have mostly different ranges. Great-tailed Grackles have paler eyes and different calls.

Shiny cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis*

Identification Tips:

Length: ? inches

Long, thin, pointed bill

Dark eyes

Frequents open habitats

Range in United States limited to south Florida but strays have occurred to Maine-range is expanding northward

Adult male:

Black iridescent plumage

Adult female:

Grayish-brown plumage-darker on upperparts

Juveniles similar to adults

Similar species:

The Shiny Cowbird is smaller and shorter-tailed than blackbirds and grackles. Male Shiny Cowbird can be told from male Brown-headed Cowbird by its lack of a brown head. Male Bronzed Cowbird has red eyes and a thicker bill. Female Shiny Cowbird very similar to female Brown-headed Cowbird but has longer, more pointed bill. Female Bronzed Cowbird has thicker bill and red eyes.

Bronzed cowbird *Molothrus aeneus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches
Long, thick, conical bill
Red eyes
Frequents open habitats

Adult male:

Black iridescent plumage

Adult female:

Grayish-brown plumage-darker on upperparts
Juveniles similar to adults

Similar species:

The Bronzed Cowbird is smaller and shorter-tailed than blackbirds and grackles and has a more conical bill. Bronzed Cowbird is similar to female Brown-headed Cowbird but has red eyes and is slightly larger with a longer bill.

Brown-headed cowbird *Molothrus ater*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches
Short, conical bill
Dark eyes
Frequents open habitats
When feeding on ground often cocks its tail
Often found in large flocks in migration and winter

Adult male:

Brown head
Black body, wings and tail

Adult female:

Grayish-brown plumage-darker on upperparts
Underparts faintly streaked
Throat pale
Juvenile browner and streakier than adult female with pale edging on wings

Similar species:

The Brown-headed Cowbird is smaller and shorter-tailed than blackbirds and grackles and has a more conical bill. Bronzed Cowbird is similar to female Brown-headed Cowbird but has red eyes and is slightly larger with a longer bill.

Orchard oriole *Icterus spurius*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches
Sharply-pointed bill

Male:

Black head, back, breast, wings and tail
Brown underparts, shoulder, and rump
Immature male similar to female but has black throat

Female:

Greenish-gray upperparts
Yellowish underparts
Two wing bars

Similar species:

Male Orchard Oriole is quite distinctive. Female Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles have grayer bellies than female Orchard Orioles. Female Hooded Oriole very similar but has a decurved bill.

Hooded oriole *Icterus cucullatus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches
Sharply-pointed bill

Male:

Black face, throat, back, wings and tail
Orange head, belly, rump and undertail coverts
White wing bars
Immature male similar to female but has black throat

Female:

Greenish-gray upperparts
Yellowish underparts
Two wing bars

Similar species:

Male Altamira Oriole is larger and has an orange shoulder. Male Bullock's Oriole has a white wing patch and a black eyeline. Male Baltimore Oriole has a black head. Rare stray Streak-backed Oriole has streaked, not black, back. Female Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles have grayer bellies than female Hooded Orioles. Female Orchard Oriole very similar but has a less decurved bill.

Bullock's oriole *Icterus bullockii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches
Sharply-pointed bill

Male:

Black crown, nape, eyeline, throat, back, wings and tail
Orange face, underparts and rump
Orange outer tail feathers
White wing patch and edges
Immature male similar to female but brighter orange with variable amounts of black on head

Female:

Grayish upperparts
Dull yellowish breast and undertail coverts
Gray belly
Two wing bars

Similar species:

Male Bullock's Oriole can be told from other black and orange orioles by its black eyeline and white wing patch. Female is similar to other female orioles but can be told from Baltimore by its yellower breast and grayer upperparts. Hooded and Orchard's have more extensively yellow underparts.

Spot-breasted oriole *Icterus pectoralis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.5 inches

Sharply-pointed bill

Black around eye and throat

Black spots on breast

Orange face, shoulder, underparts and rump

Black back, wings and tail

White wing patch and edges

Sexes similar

Immature similar to adult but duller and lacks breast spots

United States range restricted to southeastern Florida

Similar species:

Spots on breast of adult Spot-breasted Oriole are not found on any other oriole. Female-plumaged Baltimore Orioles are similar to immature Spot-breasted Orioles but lack black on the breast.

Altamira oriole Icterus gularis

Identification Tips:

Length: 8.5 inches
Sharply-pointed bill
United States range restricted to southern Texas

Adult:

Bright orange head, underparts, rump and shoulder
Small black face patch and throat
Black back, wings and tail
White edges to wing feathers

Immature:

Greenish upperparts
Yellowish underparts

Similar species:

The Altamira Oriole is similar to the Hooded Oriole but has an orange shoulder.
Immature Altamiras are larger than other orioles.

Audubon's oriole *Icterus graduacauda*

Identification Tips:

Length: 8 inches
Sharply-pointed bill
United States range restricted to southern Texas

Adult male:

Black head, wings and tail
White edges to wing feathers
Yellow back, rump, breast, belly and shoulder

Adult female:

Plumage similar to male but duller
Immature similar to female but lacks black head

Similar species:

The Audubon's Oriole is similar to the Scott's Oriole but has a yellow, not black back.
Other yellow orioles lack the black head of the Audubon's Oriole.

Baltimore oriole *Icterus galbula*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.5 inches
Sharply-pointed bill

Male:

Black head, back, wings and tail
Orange underparts, shoulder, and rump
Orange tips to outer tail feathers
White wing bar and edges
Immature male similar to female but brighter orange with variable amounts of black on head

Female:

Brownish-gray upperparts
Dull yellowish-orange breast and undertail coverts
Gray belly
Two wing bars

Similar species:

Male Baltimore Oriole can be told from other black and orange orioles by its completely black head. Female is similar to other female orioles but can be told from Bullock's by its more orange breast and less gray upperparts. Hooded and Orchard orioles have more extensively yellow underparts.

Scott's oriole *Icterus parisorum*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7 inches
Sharply-pointed bill

Male:

Black head, breast, back, wings and tail
Yellow belly, rump and shoulder patch
White wing bar
Immature male similar to female

Female:

Greenish upperparts
Dark streaks on back
Yellowish underparts
Two wing bars

Similar species:

The similar Audubon's Oriole lacks the black back of the male Scott's Oriole. Females are similar to females of other orioles but have dark streaking on the back and lack any orange coloration on the plumage.

Gray-crowned rosy-finch *Leucosticte tephrocotis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches

Black forehead and throat

Gray rear of head

Brown breast and back

Pink belly, undertail coverts, rump and wing feather edges

Forked tail

Sexes similar

Similar species:

The Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch is most likely to be confused with other rosy-finches. Black Rosy-Finch lacks brown back and breast. Brown-capped lacks gray on head.

Black rosy-finch *Leucosticte atrata*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches

Black forehead, throat, breast and back

Gray rear of head

Brown breast and back

Pink belly, undertail coverts, rump and wing feather edges

Forked tail

Female somewhat duller than male

Similar species:

The Black Rosy-Finch is most likely to be confused with other rosy-finches but it lacks brown in its plumage.

Brown-capped rosy-finch *Leucosticte australis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6.25 inches

Black forehead

Brown head, breast and back

Pink belly, undertail coverts, rump and wing feather edges

Forked tail

Female somewhat duller than male

Similar species:

The Brown-capped Rosy-Finch is most likely to be confused with other rosy-finches but it lacks a gray head patch.

Pine grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.75 inches
Large, conical bill
Long, forked tail
Distinctive call note often given in flight
Frequently gathers in flocks

Male:

Pinkish-red head, breast, back and rump
Streaked back
White undertail coverts
Black wings and tail
White wing bars and tertial edges

Female:

Yellowish-olive head and rump
Gray underparts and back
Black wings and tail
White wing bars and tertial edges

Similar species:

The Pine Grosbeak is separable from similar species (finches, crossbills) by its larger size, longer tail and distinctive call notes.

Purple finch *Carpodacus purpureus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches
Large, conical bill
Short, forked tail
Distinctive call note often given in flight

Male:

Purplish-red head, breast, back and rump
Streaked back
White undertail coverts
Brown wings and tail
Immature male resembles female

Female:

Brown crown and cheek patch contrasting with pale supercilium and malar streak
Heavily streaked underparts
Brown upperparts

Similar species:

The male Purple Finch is similar to the House Finch but lacks brown streaks on the breast and belly, has a more purple head, shorter forked tail and different call notes. Female House Finch lacks the distinctive face pattern of the female Purple Finch. Cassin's Finch is very similar in all plumages but has streaked undertail coverts and a larger bill. Male Cassin's has a brighter red crown. Female Cassin's has finer streaking on the breast and a less noticeable face pattern. Pine Siskin is similar to female but smaller and lacks face pattern. Sparrows are slimmer with longer tails and different markings.

Cassin's finch *Carpodacus cassinii*

Identification Tips:

Length: 6 inches
Conical bill
Short, forked tail
Streaked undertail coverts
Distinctive call note often given in flight

Male:

Purplish-red head, breast, back and rump
Streaked back
Brown wings and tail
Immature male resembles female

Female:

Brown crown and cheek patch contrasting with pale supercilium and malar streak
Heavily streaked underparts
Brown upperparts

Similar species:

The male Cassin's Finch is similar to the House Finch but lacks brown streaks on the belly, has a more purple head, shorter forked tail and different call notes. Female House Finch lacks the distinctive face pattern of the female Cassin's Finch. Purple Finch is very similar in all plumages but has unstreaked undertail coverts and a smaller bill. Male Cassin's has a brighter red crown. Female Cassin's has finer streaking on the breast and a less noticeable face pattern. Pine Siskin is similar to female but smaller and lacks face pattern. Sparrows are slimmer with longer tails and different markings.

House finch *Carpodacus mexicanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.25 inches
Conical bill
Long tail
Distinctive call note often given in flight

Male:

Red forehead, supercilium, breast and rump
Streaked belly and undertail coverts
Brown wings and tail
Immature male resembles female

Female:

Plainer face than Purple and Cassin's Finch
Heavily streaked underparts
Brown upperparts

Similar species:

The male House Finch can be told from Cassin's and Purple Finches by its streaked belly, browner back and nape, longer unforked tail and different call notes. Female House Finches have much plainer faces than the other finches. Pine Siskins are smaller with yellow patches in the wings and tail. Sparrows typically have more distinctive face patterns.

Red crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.5 inches
Large bill with crossed tips
Short, forked tail
Distinctive call note often given in flight
Most often found in pine trees
Often found in flocks

Male:

Dull red head and body
Blackish wings and tail

Female:

Dull gray plumage
Dull yellow crown, breast and rump
Juveniles resemble females but more heavily streaked

Similar species:

The Red Crossbill is similar to the White-winged Crossbill but lacks wing bars and has a larger bill.

White-winged crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5.75 inches
Bill with crossed tips
White wing bars
Short, forked tail
Distinctive call note often given in flight
Most often found in coniferous trees
Often found in flocks

Male:

Red head and body
Blackish wings and tail

Female:

Dull gray plumage
Dull yellow crown, breast and rump
Dark streaks on breast
Juvenile resembles female but is more heavily streaked

Similar species:

The Red Crossbill is similar to the White-winged Crossbill but lacks wing bars and has a larger bill.

Common redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Conical bill

Red forehead

Black chin

Gray back with black streaks

Streaked rump

Pale underparts with streaked sides and flanks

Forked tail

Male has pink breast

Similar species:

The Hoary Redpoll is very similar to the Common Redpoll but has an unstreaked rump and a smaller bill.

Hoary redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Conical bill

Red forehead

Black chin

Gray back with black streaks

Unstreaked rump

Pale underparts with faintly streaked sides and flanks

Forked tail

Male has pink breast

Similar species:

The Hoary Redpoll is very similar to the Common Redpoll but has an unstreaked rump and a smaller bill.

Pine siskin *Carduelis pinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, seed-eating bird
Short, conical bill
Brown upperparts with heavy streaking
Pale underparts with heavy streaking
Yellow patches in wings and tail-not always visible
Short, forked tail
Distinctive call note given in flight

Similar species:

The Pine Siskin can be identified by its yellow patches in the wings and tail. When these are not visible, as on a perched bird, it can look like a sparrow. It is smaller than sparrows and lacks a pale supercilium.

Lesser goldfinch *Carduelis psaltria*

Identification Tips:

Length: 3.75 inches
Small, seed-eating bird
Short, conical bill
Short, forked tail

Male:

Some males have black upperparts, others black crowns and green upperparts
Yellow underparts
Black wings and tail
White wing bars, tertial edges and patch in primaries

Female:

Greenish upperparts
Yellow underparts
Black wings and tail
White wing bars, tertial edges and patch in primaries
Immature resembles female

Similar species:

The male Lesser Goldfinch in alternate plumage is quite distinctive. Female Lesser Goldfinch is similar to female and immature American Goldfinch but is greener above, yellower below, and has a white patch in the wing.

Lawrence's goldfinch *Carduelis lawrencei*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, seed-eating bird
Short, conical bill
Short, forked tail

Male:

Black patch around bill
Yellow breast
Gray head, back, sides, belly and undertail coverts
Yellow wing bars and tertial edges

Female:

Mostly gray plumage
Yellow wash on breast
Yellow wing bars and tertial edges
Immature resembles female

Similar species:

Lawrence's Goldfinch can be told from other goldfinches by its gray plumage and yellow wing bars.

American goldfinch *Carduelis tristis*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, seed-eating bird
Short, conical bill
Short, forked tail

Male alternate:

Plumage held in Spring and Summer
Black forehead
Yellow head, back, breast and belly
Black wings and tail
White wing bars and tertial edges
White rump and undertail coverts
Pale bill and legs

Female alternate:

Greenish upperparts
Yellow underparts
Pale bill and legs

Basic:

Plumage held in Fall and Winter
Yellow face
Brownish-olive upperparts
Whitish underparts
Blackish wings with pale wing bars

Smilar species:

The male American Goldfinch in alternate plumage is quite distinctive. Female Lesser Goldfinch is similar to female and immature American Goldfinch but is greener above and has a white patch in the wing.

Evening grosbeak *Coccothraustes vespertinus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 7.25 inches
Large, pale, conical bill
Short tail
Distinctive call note often given in flight
Frequently gathers in flocks

Male:

Yellow forehead, supercilium and body
Brown head and upperback
Black wings and tail
Large white patch in wing

Female:

Gray upperparts
Pale gray underparts
Black wings and tail
White patches in wings

Similar species:

The male Evening Grosbeak is instantly recognizable. Females have large bills, short tails and distinctive call notes.

House sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 4.25 inches
Small, seed-eating bird
Thick, conical bill
Pink legs
Extremely common in urban and agricultural areas

Adult male:

Gray crown
Black throat, upper breast, and small mask; less black on throat in winter
Grayish side of neck and underparts
Rusty-brown nape and upperparts
Black streaks on back
White patch in wing
Gray rump
Black bill in summer; yellowish in winter

Female and immature:

Gray-brown crown
Buffy line extends rearward from eye bordered below by gray-brown line
Grayish-white underparts
Black and tawny streaks on back
Black wing feathers with wide tawny edges
White patch on wing
Yellow bill
Immature males lack full throat patch of adults

Similar species:

The adult male House Sparrow is quite distinctive but might be confused with the very local Eurasian Tree Sparrow (St. Louis, Missouri). The Eurasian Tree Sparrow has a black spot on the ear coverts and an entirely brown crown. The female House Sparrow looks somewhat similar to a number of species of sparrows but has unstreaked underparts, tawny streaks on the back, and a large yellowish bill. The female Dickcissel also has a large bill but it is gray, not yellow, and usually has some yellow in the face and a rusty patch in the wing.

Eurasian tree sparrow *Passer montanus*

Identification Tips:

Length: 5 inches

Small, seed-eating bird

Thick, conical bill

Pink legs

Extremely local range in United States-St. Louis, Missouri

Sexes similar

Brown crown

Black spot on ear coverts

White on face and neck

Black chin and eye patch

Grayish-white underparts

Brown and black upperparts

White wing bars

Similar species:

The adult male House Sparrow might be confused with the very local Eurasian Tree Sparrow. The Eurasian Tree Sparrow has a black spot on the ear coverts and an entirely brown crown.

GLOSSARY

abdomen

Ventral part of the bird. Synonym(s): belly. In picture it is referred to as belly.

alula

Three feathers springing from the base of the primaries. Synonym(s): alular quills.

alular quill coverts

Feathers overlying the bases of alula.

alular quills

Three feathers springing from the base of the primaries. Synonym(s): alula. In picture it is referred to as alula.

auricular

Area around ear opening. Synonym(s): ear patch.

axillary

Ventral area between the body and the wing. Synonym(s): wingpit.

back

Dorsal part of the bird.

BBS

Breeding Bird Survey. This survey is typically performed in June by volunteers on over 4000 bird counts. The counts are done by vehicle during the morning. Many nocturnal or less vocal species are not well surveyed by the BBS. Data from this survey is used to generate the BBS maps.

belly

Ventral part of the bird. Synonym(s): abdomen.

bill

Beak.

body

Main mass of the bird as distinguished from its appendages.

breast

Front part of the chest.

breast band

Stripe across the breast.

breast spot

Small, differently colored area on the breast.

cap

Top of the crown.

CBC

Christmas Bird Count. This survey is performed in one calendar day any time from mid-December to early January by volunteers. Birds are counted in an area with a 15 mile radius. Data from this survey is used to generate the CBC maps.

cere

Fleshy area between the beak and face.

cheek

Area bounded by lore, eye, auricular, and lower mandible.

chest

Front part of the body.

chin

Part of the face below the bill.

collar

Rear portion of crown. Synonym(s): nape, hindneck. In picture it is referred to as hindneck.

comb

Colored area over eye found in males.

commissure

Base of the bill where the mandibles join. Synonym(s): gape, rictus. In picture it is referred to as gape.

crest

Tuft on the head.

crissum

Feathers covering underside of base of tail. Synonym(s): undertail coverts. In picture it is referred to as undertail coverts.

crown

Top of the head.

culmen

Upper ridge on bill.

dihedral

Wings of a flying bird held at an angle appearing to form a V.

ear patch

Area around ear opening. Synonym(s): auricular. In picture it is referred to as auricular.

ears

Rounded, earlike areas on the face. Synonym(s): facial discs. In picture it is referred to as facial discs.

eye

Organ of sight.

eye line

Line of feathers in front of and behind the eye.

eye ring

Pale-colored feathers encircling the eye.

eyebrow

Line of feathers above the eye. Synonym(s): supercilium, superciliary line. In picture it is referred to as supercilium.

eyelid

Skin-fold covering the eye.

face

Front part of the head.

facial discs

Rounded, earlike areas on the face. Synonym(s): ears.

feet

Terminal part of the leg.

flank

Area between the belly and the wings, more posterior.

flank stripe

Band on the flanks.

flight feathers

Primaries and secondaries.

forehead

Part of the face above the eyes.

foreneck

Front part of the neck. Synonym(s): throat, jugulum, throat patch.

frontal shield

Extension of the bill onto the forehead.

gape

Base of the bill where the mandibles join. Synonym(s): commissure, rictus.

gonys

Lowermost ridge on lower mandible.

greater secondary coverts

Feathers overlying bases of secondaries.

gular region

Between the chin and the foreneck.

head

Upper part of the body.

head stripes

Bold lines on the head.

hindhead

Rear portion of crown. Synonym(s): occiput.

hindneck

Back of the neck. Synonym(s): nape, collar.

horns

Paired contour feathers arising from head.

inner primaries

Group of primaries closest to the body.

inner secondaries

Group of secondaries closest to the body.

inner wing

Shoulder, secondaries and secondary coverts.

iris

Colored part of eye.

jugulum

Front part of the neck. Synonym(s): foreneck, throat, throat patch. In picture it is referred to as foreneck.

knee

Joint in the middle part of the leg.

leading edge of wing

Front edge of the wing in flight.

leg

Limb used for supporting the bird.

lesser secondary coverts

Feathers overlying bases of median secondary coverts. Synonym(s): marginal coverts, shoulder.

lore

Area between the eye and the bill.

lower mandible

Lower part of the bill.

lower mandibular tomia

Cutting edges of lower mandible.

malar streak

Area at the sides of the chin. Synonym(s): whisker, moustache. In picture it is referred to as whisker.

mandibular ramus

Prong-like, posterior projection from bill.

mantle

Upper surface of the wings and the back.

marginal coverts

Feathers overlying bases of median secondary coverts. Synonym(s): lesser secondary coverts, shoulder. In picture it is referred to as lesser secondary coverts.

median line

Stripe through the crown.

median secondary coverts

Feathers overlying bases of greater secondary coverts.

moustache

Area at the sides of the chin. Synonym(s): whisker, malar streak. In picture it is referred to as whisker .

mouth

Cavity bounded by the bill.

nape

Back of the neck. Synonym(s): hindneck, collar. In picture it is referred to as hindneck.

nasal canthus

Anterior corner of eye.

nasal fossa

Depression in which nostril is located.

neck

Part connecting the head to the main part of the body.

neck patch

Inflatable sac on neck used by males in courtship display.

nictitating membrane

Translucent, vertical fold under the eye lid.

nostril

External naris.

occiput

Rear portion of crown. Synonym(s): hindhead. In picture it is referred to as hindhead.

operculum

Swollen structure in pigeons overarching the nostril.

outer primaries

Group of primaries farthest from the body.

outer secondaries

Group of secondaries farthest from the body.

outer tail feathers

Part of the tail farthest from the center.

outer wing

Alula and primaries.

patagial mark

Dark patch on leading edge of underside of inner wing.

pelagic

Living on the open ocean rather than coastal or inland bodies of water

pileum

Top of the head extending from the base of the bill to the nape

pinnae

Projecting feathers.

plumes

Large, conspicuous, showy, feathers.

primaries

Flight feathers attached to the hand.

primary coverts

Feathers protecting and covering the primaries.

primary numbering

System for assigning a number to each primary.

pupil

Contractile aperture in iris.

rectrices

Conspicuous feathers forming posterior margin of tail.

remiges

See primaries and secondaries.

rictal bristles

Stiffened feathers near bill.

rictus

Base of the bill where the mandibles join. Synonym(s): gape, commissure. In picture it is referred to as gape.

ruffs

Fringe of feathers growing on the neck.

rump

Area between the uppertail coverts and the back.

scapulars

Area of feathers between the back and the wings.

secondaries

Flight feathers attached to the elbow.

secondary coverts

Feathers protecting and covering the secondaries.

shoulder

Feathers overlying bases of median secondary coverts. Synonym(s): lesser secondary coverts, marginal coverts. In picture it is referred to as lesser secondary coverts.

side

Area between the belly and the wing.

side of neck

Area of neck between foreneck and hindneck.

spectacle

Eye ring and supraloral line together.

speculum

Highly colored area on secondaries of several ducks.

suborbital ring

Eyelids.

subterminal band

Stripe before tip of tail.

superciliary line

Line of feathers above the eye. Synonym(s): supercilium, eyebrow. In picture it is referred to as supercilium.

supercilium

Line of feathers above the eye. Synonym(s): eyebrow, superciliary line.

supraloral line

Line of feathers above the lore.

tail

Feathers extending from the rear of the bird.

tail coverts

Under and uppertail coverts.

tail numbering

System for assigning a number to each tail feather.

tarsus

Part of the leg between the knee and the foot.

temporal canthus

Posterior corner of eye.

terminal band

Stripe at tip of tail.

tertiaries

Feathers adjoining the secondaries.

throat

Front part of the neck. Synonym(s): foreneck, jugulum, throat patch. In picture it is referred to as foreneck.

throat patch

Front part of the neck. Synonym(s): foreneck, throat, jugulum. In picture it is referred to as foreneck.

tibia

Part of the leg above the knee.

toe

Digit attached to the feet.

trailing edge of wing

Rear edge of the wing in flight.

underparts

Belly, undertail coverts, chest, flanks, and foreneck.

undertail coverts

Feathers covering underside of base of tail. Synonym(s): crissum.

underwing

Underside of wing.

upper mandible

Upper part of the bill.

upper mandibular tomia

Cutting edges of upper mandible.

upperparts

Back, rump, hindneck, wings, and crown.

uppertail coverts

Feathers covering upperside of base of tail.

upperwing

Upperside of wing.

whisker

Area at the sides of the chin. Synonym(s): moustache, malar streak.

wing

Moveable feathered appendage.

wing bars

Pale tips of greater and median secondary coverts.

wing coverts

Primary and secondary coverts.

wing lining

Median, lesser and marginal coverts on underwing.

wing stripe

Paler area at base of flight feathers.

wingpit

Ventral area between the body and the wing. Synonym(s): axillary. In picture it is referred to as axillary.

wrist

Area at base of the primaries.