

California Quail



California Quail are gray and brown, with a black face outlined with bold white stripes. Both sexes have a comma-shaped topknot of feathers projecting forward from the forehead, longer in males than females. They have short, very broad wings. The tail is fairly long and square. California Quail spend most of their time on the ground, walking and scratching in search of food. They forage beneath shrubs or on open ground near cover. They usually travel in groups called coveys. Their flight is explosive but lasts just long enough to reach cover. You'll find California Quail in chaparral, sagebrush, oak woodlands, and foothill forests of most western states. They're quite tolerant of people and can be common in city parks, suburban gardens, and agricultural areas.

Ring-necked Pheasant



Ring-necked Pheasant gaudy birds with red faces and an iridescent green neck with a bold white ring. They have very long tails that are coppery with thin, black bars. Pheasants live in agricultural areas intermixed with areas of taller vegetation, which they use for cover. They forage on the ground in fields, where they eat waste grain, other seeds, and insects when available. Ring-necked Pheasants usually walk or run and only occasionally resort to flying, usually when disturbed at close range by humans or other predators. Males give a loud, cackling display that can be heard over long distances.

Steller's Jay



Steller's Jays have a prominent triangular crest that often stands nearly straight up from their head. Their heads are charcoal black and the body is all blue, lightest, almost sparkling, on the wings. White markings above the eye are fairly inconspicuous. Steller's Jays are common evergreen forests in the mountainous West but are also fixtures of campgrounds, parklands, and backyards, where they are quick to spy bird feeders as well as unattended picnic items. You'll hear their harsh, scolding calls if they're nearby. Like other jays, Steller's Jays are bold, inquisitive, intelligent, and noisy. Steller's Jays spend much of their time exploring the forest canopy, flying with patient wingbeats. They come to the forest floor to investigate visitors and look for food, moving with decisive hops of their long legs.

Western Tanager



The Western Tanager has an orange-red head, brilliant yellow body, and coal-black wings, back and tail. These birds live in open woods all over the West, particularly among evergreens, where they often stay hidden in the canopy. They fill the woods with their short, burry song and low, chuckling call notes. Western Tanagers forage slowly and methodically along branches and among leaves or needles of trees. They eat primarily insects, supplemented with small fruits in fall and winter. They sometimes catch insects in the air. In spring and summer,

Red Tailed Hawk



Red-tailed Hawks are rich brown on the wings and pale tan on the head. They have a light brown belly with brown streaks and a warm red tail. In young birds it's brown and banded. This is the most common hawk in North America. You'll see them along fields and perched on posts or telephones poles along edges of fields, eyes fixed on the ground to catch the movements of a vole or a rabbit. Red-tailed Hawks often soar above open fields, slowly turning circles on their broad, rounded wings.

Mountain Bluebird



Mountain Bluebirds are small thrushes. They are shiny blue above and the lower belly is whitish. Mountain Bluebirds' bills are entirely black. Unlike many thrushes, Mountain Bluebirds hunt insects from perches or while on the wing, at times resembling a tiny American Kestrel with their long wings, hovering flight, and quick dives.

These birds are highly social, and usually feed in flocks during the non-breeding season. They hunt for terrestrial insects by dropping to the ground from a low perch. Western Bluebirds also frequently feed on berries in trees. Western Bluebirds rely on trees both for nesting cavities and hunting perches, and also perch on fences and utility lines. They are found in open woodland, farmland and are often found in backyards, from sea level far up into the mountains.

Wild Turkey



Wild Turkeys are very large, plump birds with long legs and a small head on a long, slim neck. They are dark brown overall with tail feathers that are light brown. The bare skin of the head and neck varies from red to blue to gray. They occur in every state except Alaska. Wild Turkeys live in mature oak or beach forests next to grassy fields. Turkeys travel in flocks and search on the ground for nuts, berries, insects, and snails. At night, turkeys fly up into trees to roost in groups. In early spring, males gather in clearings to perform courtship displays. The males puff up their body feathers, flare their tails into a vertical fan, and strut slowly while giving a characteristic gobbling call. At night, turkeys fly up into trees to roost in groups.

Bald Eagle



The Bald Eagle has been the national emblem of the United States since 1782 and a spiritual symbol for native people for far longer than that. They aren't really bald, but their white-feathered heads gleam in contrast to their chocolate-brown body and wings. Once endangered by hunting and pesticides, Bald Eagles have flourished under protection. They eat mainly fish, but also hunt mammals, gulls, and waterfowl. They scavenge meals by harassing other birds or by eating carrion. You'll find Bald Eagles soaring high in the sky, flapping low over treetops with slow wingbeats, or perched in trees or on the ground. Look for Bald Eagles near lakes, reservoirs, rivers, marshes, and coasts. For a chance to see large Bald Eagle congregations, check out wildlife refuges or large bodies of water in winter.

Acorn Woodpecker



These striking birds are mostly black above with a red cap, creamy white face, and black patch around the bill. Acorn Woodpeckers live in large groups in western oak woodlands and mixed oak-conifer forests on slopes and mountains. They store thousands of acorns each year by jamming them into specially made holes they've made in a tree trunk or telephone pole. Acorn Woodpeckers also spend considerable time catching insects on the wing. A group member is always on alert to guard the hoard from thieves. while others race through the trees giving parrotlike waka-waka calls.. Females have less red on the crown than males. They're tolerant of humans, and you can find them in towns where there are acorns and suitable places to store them.

Wood Duck



The Wood Duck is one of the most colorful of all waterfowl. Males are iridescent chestnut and green, with ornate patterns on nearly every feather. The elegant females have a distinctive profile and delicate white pattern around the eye. These birds live in wooded swamps, where they nest in holes in trees or in nest boxes put up around lake margins. They are one of the few duck species equipped with strong claws that can grip bark and perch on branches. Their broad tail and short broad wings help make them maneuverable. You often see Wood Ducks in small groups (fewer than 20), keeping apart from other waterfowl.

California Gull



A common gull of the West Coast, they breed inland across large areas of the West. They nest in shallow depressions on the ground. The female usually lays 2 or 3 eggs. The islands in Mono Lake provide protection from predators and have a large breeding population. The gulls inhabit salt ponds that have a food source provided by nearby landfills from San Francisco to Sacramento. This is the state bird of Utah and is remembered for assisting Mormon settlers with a plague of crickets.

Hummingbird



The Allen's hummingbirds arrive in their breeding territory in northern California in February. They are found in live oak stands, flower filled meadows, gardens from Santa Barbara north. The male is highly aggressive and territorial. They have been seen attacking birds several times larger their own size. They primarily feed on nectar taken from brightly colored, scented small flowers of trees and shrubs. Their favorite plants are the fuchsias, honeysuckle, Indian paintbrush and monkey flowers. They use their long extendible tongues to retrieve nectar while hovering with their tails cocked upward. Many native and cultivated plants on whose flowers these birds feed heavily rely on them for pollination. They also forage for small spiders, ants and aphids.

Red Winged Blackbird



One of the most abundant birds across North America, and one of the most boldly colored with glossy black with red-and-yellow shoulder badges. They are a familiar sight in fresh and saltwater marshes, along watercourses, water hazards on golf courses, and wet roadsides, as well as drier meadows and old fields. In winter, you can find them at crop fields, feedlots, and pastures. Male Red-winged Blackbirds do everything they can to get noticed, sitting on high perches and belting out their song all day long. Females stay lower, searching through vegetation for food and quietly weaving together their remarkable nests. In winter Red-winged Blackbirds gather in huge flocks to eat grains with other blackbird species and starlings.

Western Meadow Lark



Western Meadowlarks have yellow underparts with intricately patterned brown, black and buff back. A black “V” crosses the bright yellow breast. The buoyant, flutelike melody of the Western Meadowlark ringing out across a field can brighten anyone’s day. In spring males sing out from atop fence posts, bushes, power lines, and other high points. When flushed they fly low, wings below the horizontal, gliding and flapping with short, stiff, quail-like wingbeats. These birds are ground feeders, foraging for seeds and insects in grasslands, meadows, pastures, and along marsh edges throughout the West.

Barn Owl



Ghostly pale and strictly nocturnal, Barn Owls are silent predators of the night world. They have a whitish face with dark eyes. Their chest, and belly are white and their back is light brown. Barn Owls nest and roost in cavities, abandoned barns and other buildings, and dense trees. Barn Owls require large areas of open land over which to hunt. This can either be marsh, grasslands, or mixed agricultural fields. At night, Barn Owls hunt by flying low, back and forth over open habitats, searching for small rodents primarily by sound. When seen at night they can appear all white. You can find them by listening for their eerie, raspy calls, quite unlike the hoots of other owls. Despite a worldwide distribution, Barn Owls are declining in parts of their range due to habitat loss.