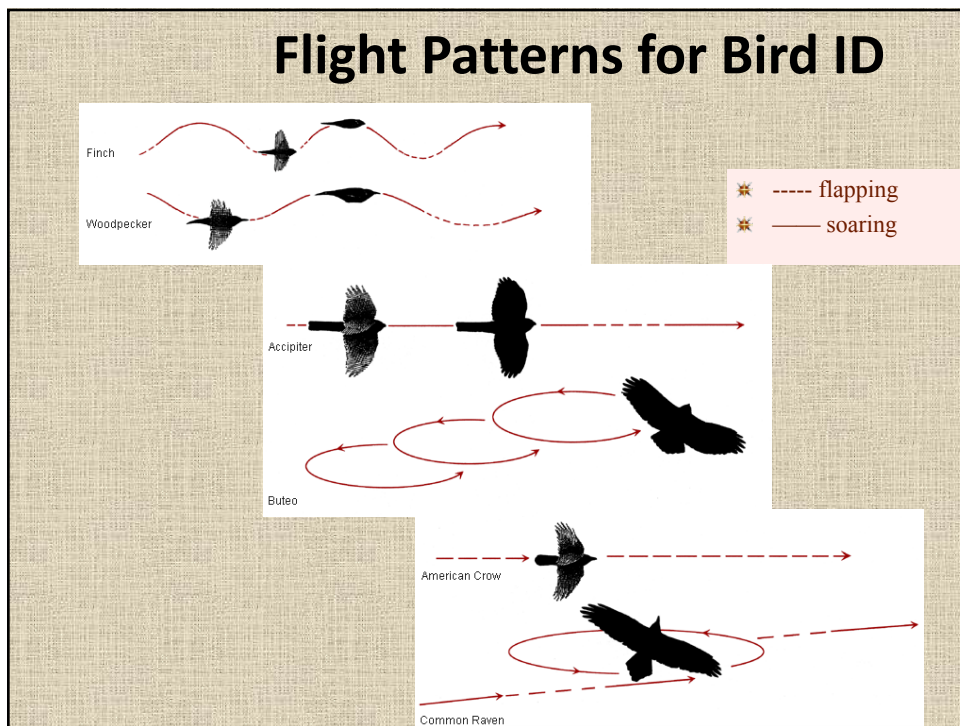
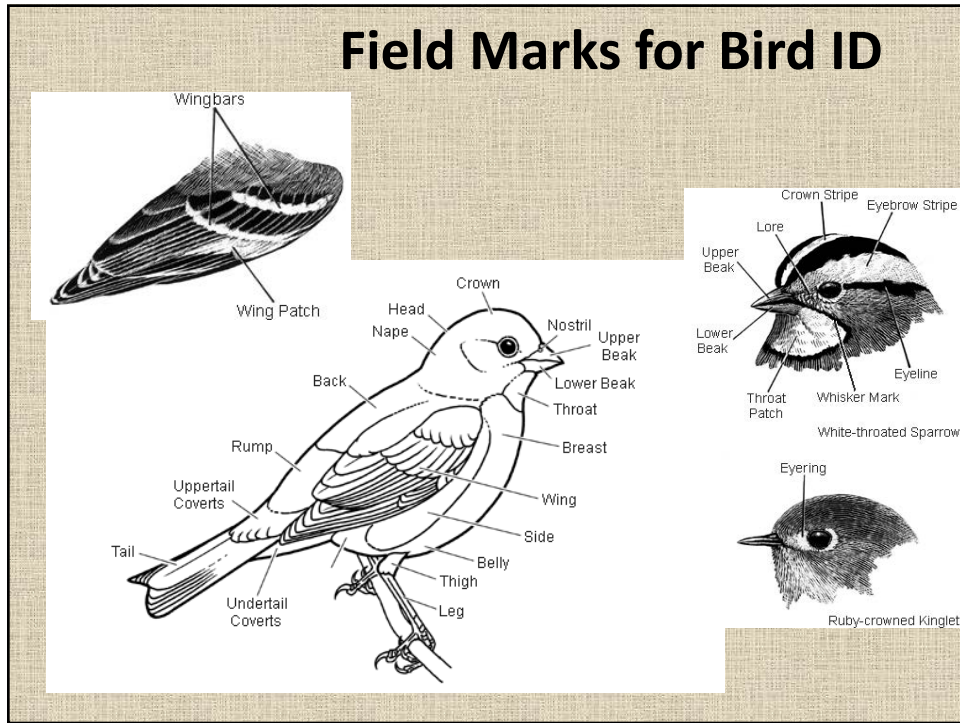


# **CALIFORNIA NATIVE BIRDS**

De Anza College  
Biology 6C: Ecology and Evolution  
Bruce Heyer

**A few common  
(and not so common)  
local birds**

**Regularly seen in yards, on  
campus, or in local parks**





**Red Tailed Hawk**  
*Buteo jamaicensis*  
Accipitridae (hawks)



- Broad, rounded wings and a short, wide tail.
- The tail is usually pale below and cinnamon-red above
- Flies in wide circles high above ground.
- Brown above, and pale underbelly
- Habitat: In open country, perch on fences, poles, trees, etc.



**Cooper's Hawk**  
*Accipiter cooperii*  
Accipitridae (hawks)

- Short, rounded wings and a long tail. Long legs. Short, hooked bill.
- Highly maneuverable, fast flyer through tree canopy.
- Blue-gray upper parts with dark cap. Pale underparts with reddish bars. Long rounded tail with dark bars and white terminal band. Yellow to orange eyes and yellow legs.
- Habitat: Woodlands and shrublands. Sometimes stake out bird feeders in yards.





## Turkey Vulture

*Cathartes aura*  
Cathartidae (vultures)

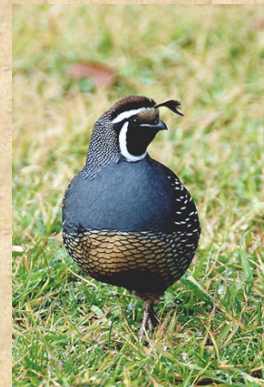
- Large dark birds, have a featherless red head and pale bill. Dark feathers (brown, look black from fatter). Have pale underside of feathers (“two-tone” appearance)
- Commonly found in open areas.
- Very few wing beats, characteristic soaring.



## California Quail

*Callipepla californica*  
Phasianidae (partridges)

- Plump, short-necked game birds with a small head and bill. They fly on short, very broad wings. Both sexes have a comma-shaped topknot of feathers projecting forward from the forehead.
- Adult males are rich gray and brown, with a black face outlined with bold white stripes. Females are a plainer brown and lack the facial markings. Both sexes have a pattern of white, creamy, and chestnut scales on the belly.
- Live in scrublands and desert areas.
- Diet consists of seeds, some vegetation, and insects



## Mourning Dove

*Zenaida macroura*  
Columbidae (doves)



- Plump bodies, small bill and short legs. Pointed tail. Usually greyish-tan with black spots on wings. White tips to tail feathers.
- Beat wings rapidly, and powerfully.
- Found everywhere.
- Usually feeds on seeds.



## Rock Dove (Pigeon)

*Columba livia*  
Columbidae (doves)



- Larger than mourning doves, large bodies, small heads and feet. Wide, rounded tails and pointed wings.
- Generally blue-gray, with iridescent throat feathers, bright feet. Tail usually has dark tips
- Prevalent in towns, also feeds on seeds.





## American Crow

*Corvus brachyrhynchos*  
Corvidae (crows & jays)

- Large, straight bill. Has long legs and a short tail, with rounded or squared edge.
- All black feathers, often glossy.
- Highly adaptable and live everywhere—natural and human habitats.
- Eat a wide array of food—seeds, nuts, insects, small animals and fish. Also eats garbage.



## Common Raven

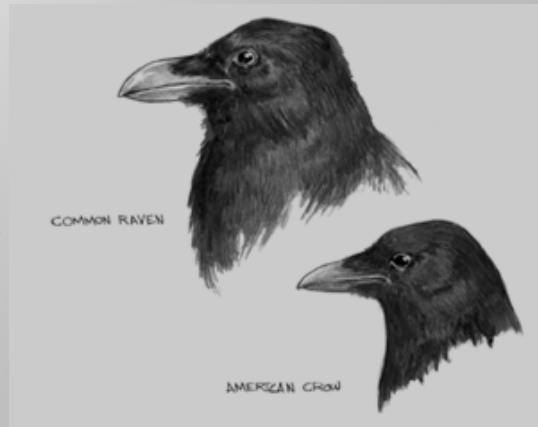
*Corvus corax*  
Corvidae (crows & jays)

- Massive bird, with thick neck, shaggy neck feathers, very prominent beak. Longer, narrower wings than crow, and more slender “fingers” and wing tips.
- Entirely black.
- Generally found in the mountains, where it has an omnivore diet.



## RAVEN vs CROW

- Note raven's massive beak and shaggy throat feathers vs crow's more streamlined head



### California Scrub Jay *Apelocoma californica* Corvidae (crows & jays)

- Long floppy tail, hunched over posture, blue and gray above, and pale underside. Look dark. Blue strip on neck. Dark bill.
- Generally found in shrubs and scrubs.
- Generally has an omnivore diet.



## Steller's Jay *Cyanocitta stelleri* Corvidae (crows & jays)

- Large head, with feathers in a pointed formation, rounded wings, long tail, and chunky body. Song birds.
- They have black head, and blue bodies, lack a pale underbelly.
- Generally lives in forests, in trees, and follows an omnivore diet.



## Brewer's Blackbird *Euphagus cyanocephalus* Icteridae (blackbirds)

- Small bird with a fairly long tail, round head, and long, thick-based beak. Has long legs.
- Males are glossy black all over with a staring yellow eye and a blue sheen on the head grading to greenish iridescence on the body.
- Females are plainer brown, darkest on the wings and tail, with a dark eye
- Live in open habits and feed on seeds, grains, and insects.





## Red-Winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus* Icteridae (blackbirds)

- Eat insects, seeds, corn, and wheat
- They are found in many varieties of fields and marshes
- Slender, conical bill and a medium-length tail.
- They're coloring is an even glossy black with red-and-yellow shoulder badges.
- Females are crisply streaked and dark brownish overall, paler on the breast and often show a whitish eyebrow.



## Western Meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta* Icteridae (blackbirds)

- Flat head, long, slender bill, and a round-shouldered posture that nearly conceals its neck. The wings are rounded and short for the bird's size and the tail is short, stiff, and spiky.
- Yellow underside with intricately patterned brown, black and buff upperparts. A black "V" crosses the bright yellow breast; it is gray in winter. Contrasting stripes of dark brown and light buff mark the head.



- Like to live in open grasslands, meadows, prairies, and some agricultural fields
- Eat both grain and weed seeds along with insects

**European Starling**  
*Sturnus vulgaris*  
Sturnidae (starlings)

- They have short tails and long, slender beaks. In flight their wings are short and pointed, making them look rather like small, four-pointed stars (and giving them their name).
- They are purplish-green iridescent with yellow beaks; in winter their plumage is brown and covered in brilliant white spots.
- Live in areas near people.
- They eat mainly invertebrates and insects.



**California (Brown) Towhee**  
*Pipilo crissalis*  
Fringillidae (finches & sparrows)

- Has short rounded wings, long tail, and thick seed-cracking beak.
- Uniform brown, a patch of noticeably warmer brown under the tail.
- Generally found in scrubs and bushes.
- Feeds on seed



## Dark-Eyed Junco

*Junco hyemalis*

Fringillidae (finches & sparrows)

- Rounded head, short sturdy bill, long tail (a larger version of a sparrow).
- Generally dark grey or brown, white outer tail feathers, a pinkish bill.
- Generally found in coniferous forests.
- Generally feed on seeds and insects.



## House Finch

*Carpodacus mexicanus*

Fringillidae (finches & sparrows)

- Relatively flat heads, large beaks, and small bodies. They have long tails, and short wings.
- Males are red colored around the face and upper chest, with brown streaks on back, belly and tails. Females are greyish-brown all over.
- Found everywhere—human habitats, natural habitats, etc. Feed on seeds, buds and fruits.



## Song Sparrow

*Melospiza melodia*

Fringillidae (finches & sparrows)

- Medium size and fairly bulky, rounded head, and short, sturdy beak. Broad wings, and long rounded tail.
- Have thick brown streaks all over body. Streaks vary with location.
- Prefer open natural habitats.
- Mainly eat seeds and fruit, and some insects.



## White-Crowned Sparrow

*Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Fringillidae (finches & sparrows)

- Small bill and long tail. Brown streaks on body. Looks like a typical sparrow.
- Black and white stripes on the crown. Pale pink or yellow bill.



## Chestnut-Backed Chickadee

*Parus rufescens*

Paridae (chickadees & tits)



- Tiny, large-headed but small-billed, with a rather long, narrow tail and short, rounded wings.
- Boldly black and white on the head, with a back colored a rich chestnut. The flanks can be either rich brown (north of San Francisco) or dull gray (central and southern California).
- Eat mainly insects but also feed on seeds, berries, and fruit pulp.
- Live in forests that line the coast



- Very small bird.
- Long tail and short wings.
- Plain gray-brown without markings
- Found in mountains, woodlands, and suburban areas
- Eats small insects and spiders



## Bushtit

*Psaltriparus minimus*

Paridae  
(chickadees & tits)



### Oak (Plain) Titmouse

*Parus inornatus*  
Paridae (chickadees & tits)

- Small, drab, gray bird with small tuft on head.
- Lives in warm, dry oak and oak-pine woodlands at low to mid-elevations.
- Eats seeds and terrestrial invertebrates.



### House (English) Sparrow

*Passer domesticus*  
Passeridae (Eurasian sparrows)



- House Sparrows are chunkier, fuller in the chest, with a larger, rounded head, shorter tail, and stouter bill than most American sparrows.
- Live in cities, towns, etc., usually in places near people.
- Eat grains, seeds, and insects besides scraps of human food.
- Their backs are noticeably striped with buff, black, and brown.



- Males have gray heads, white cheeks, a black bib, and rufous neck
- Females are a plain buffy-brown overall with dingy gray-brown underparts.

## Barn Swallow

*Hirundo rustica*

Hirundinidae (swallows)

- Steely blue back, wings, and tail, and rufous to tawny underparts and a cinnamon-colored throat.
- long outer feathers give the tail a deep fork.
- They rarely glide, preferring to execute quick, tight turns and dives.
- Feed on flying insects, prefers open habitats.




## Cliff Swallow

*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Hirundinidae (swallows)

- Small, long-winged stocky songbird. Chubbier than the barn swallow.
- Long, pointed wings and a square tail. Has a small bill
- Dark-colored throat and a pale rump
- Live in open areas and cliffs.
- Feed on flying insects.






### Acorn Woodpecker

*Melanerpes formicivorus*  
Picidae (woodpeckers)

- Preferred habitat is oak and pine-oak forests
- Eats insects, acorns, saps, and fruit.

- Medium-sized woodpecker.
- Has a solid black back and chest, and its head is black, white, and red.
- The red crown on males covers the nape of its neck to its forehead.
- Females only have red on the back of their crown, and have a black and white forehead.



### Violet-green Swallow

*Tachycineta thalassina*  
Hirundinidae (swallows)



- Eat flying insects
- Small, slender songbird with a small bill and long wings.
- Face and underside of body is white, and has a shiny greenish bronze back.
- Adult male has a multicolored upper side with an iridescent emerald green back, sometimes with violet gloss on the upper tail coverts. Females are drab colored.
- They live in Open or broken deciduous, coniferous, and mixed woodlands. Likes trees in open areas.





- Black-and-white barred back, with unbarred black region at top of back. A small sized woodpecker.
- Found primarily in oak woodlands and in riparian woods. Feeds on insects and some fruit

**Nuttall's Woodpecker**  
*Dendrocopos nuttalli*  
Picidae (woodpeckers)



- Male with forehead black, streaked with white on center of crown, red on rear crown and upper nape.



- Female with forehead, crown, and nape black with some white streaking. No red.

- Fairly large songbirds with a large, round body, long legs, and fairly long tail.
- They are gray-brown birds with warm orange undersides and dark heads.
- Compared with males, females have paler heads that contrast less with the gray back.
- Robins exist all over the continent, but mainly in open woodland areas
- Their diet consists of insects and fruit.

**American Robin**  
*Turdus migratorius*  
Turdidae (thrushes)



**Northern Mockingbird**  
*Mimus polyglottos*  
Mimidae (mockingbirds)



- Have small heads, a long, thin bill with a hint of a downward curve, and long legs. Their wings are short, rounded, and broad, making the tail seem particularly long in flight.
- Have an overall gray-brown, paler on the breast and belly, with two white wingbars on each wing. A white patch in each wing is often visible on perched birds.
- It's habitat ranges from towns, suburbs, backyards, parks, forest edges, and open land
- They eat insects and fruit.



© James Sanford/CLO



**Western Bluebird**  
*Sialia mexicana*  
Turdidae (thrushes)

- Medium-sized songbird with a large, round head.
- Its wings and tail blue is a cobalt blue and it has a dark red chest. It also has some dark red on its back.
- Females tend to have more of a gray coloring than blue.
- Lives in open coniferous and deciduous forests
- Eats insects, fruits, and seeds.

## Black Phoebe

*Sayornis nigricans*

Tyrannidae (flycatchers)

- A small, black songbird with a white belly.
- The juvenile plumage is similar to adult's, but browner, with two cinnamon wing bars, cinnamon tips to the feathers on the upperparts.
- Found in open areas near water, along cliffs, streams, lakes, agricultural areas, and parks. Often found around buildings.
- It's diet consists of insects, some small berries and small fish.



## Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*

Anatidae (ducks & geese)

- Males: Bright green head, chestnut brown breast, white-grey body. Greenish yellow bill.
- Female: Brownish all over (camouflage), yellow or orange bill.
- Generally found in wetlands.





## Canada Goose *Branta Canadensis* Anatidae (ducks & geese)

- Long neck, large, flat bill, webbed feet and large bodies
- Water birds; generally found around water bodies—lakes, ponds, rivers, etc.
- Black head and white cheeks, black neck, brown back, and tan chest.
- Move in flocks, in a “V” formation.



## Killdeer

*Charadrius vociferus*  
Charadriidae (plovers)

- Characteristically large, round, head. Short bill and large eyes. Long tail. Brown on top, pale on underside.
- Have black bands on chest, and white patches on head. Orange rump obvious in flight.
- Generally found in grasslands, and feeds on ground insects.



## Great Blue Heron

*Ardea herodias*

Ardeidae (herons)

- Description: large blue-grey bird, S shaped neck, long thick bill, white strip on crown, yellow bill.
- Generally found around calm waters/seacoasts.
- Stabs prey with quick pecks of the bill (generally in water)



## Great Egret

*Casmerodius albus*

Ardeidae (herons)

- Large white bird, white heron. Long, straight, yellow bill. S shaped neck. Long lack feet and legs.
- Found in marshy areas.
- Feeds on wetland creatures. Also kills prey with quick stabs of bill.



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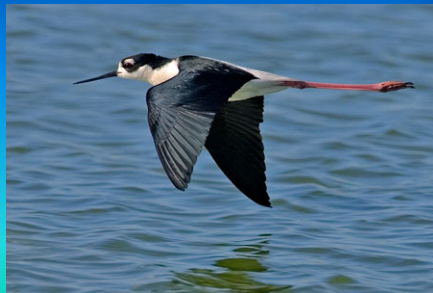
## Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* Ardeidae (herons)

- Medium size bird, thin, long, neck and all white feathers.
- Black legs and yellow feet (feet color is difference between great and snowy egrets).
- Dark bill



## Black-Necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* Recurvirostridae (stilts)

- A large shorebird with very long, thin red legs. Has a long, thin, straight black bill.
- Has a black face, hind neck, and back. Its throat and underside is white.
- Inhabits wetlands and shorelines
- They eat aquatic invertebrates and fish.



**American Avocet**  
*Recurvirostra americana*  
Recurvirostridae (stilts)



- It's a large shorebird with long legs and a long, upturned bill.
- It has a white stomach and black back. It's neck and head is either rusty or gray colored.
- Lives in shallow, fresh and saltwater wetlands. Eats aquatic invertebrates.



Santa Clara Valley  
Audubon Society

- <https://scvas.org>

**Backyard Birds of Santa Clara County**

- <https://scvas.org/common-backyard-birds>