



LEARN 10 Birds of the Wenatchee Watershed

text by Susan Ballinger using sources:

The Sibley Field Guide to Birds

National Geographic Field Guide to Birds

The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of N. Am. Birds

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Lori Aylesworth <http://www.aylesworthart.com/art/Welcome.html>

Rod Gilbert <http://www.pbase.com/rodg/profile>

Great blue heron *Ardea Herodias*



Wading Birds- Family Ardeidae. Herons, egrets, & bitterns all have coiled necks & straight dagger-like-bills used to capture prey in quick strikes.

Nests in colonies in trees. Usually seen singly, but may roost in small flocks.

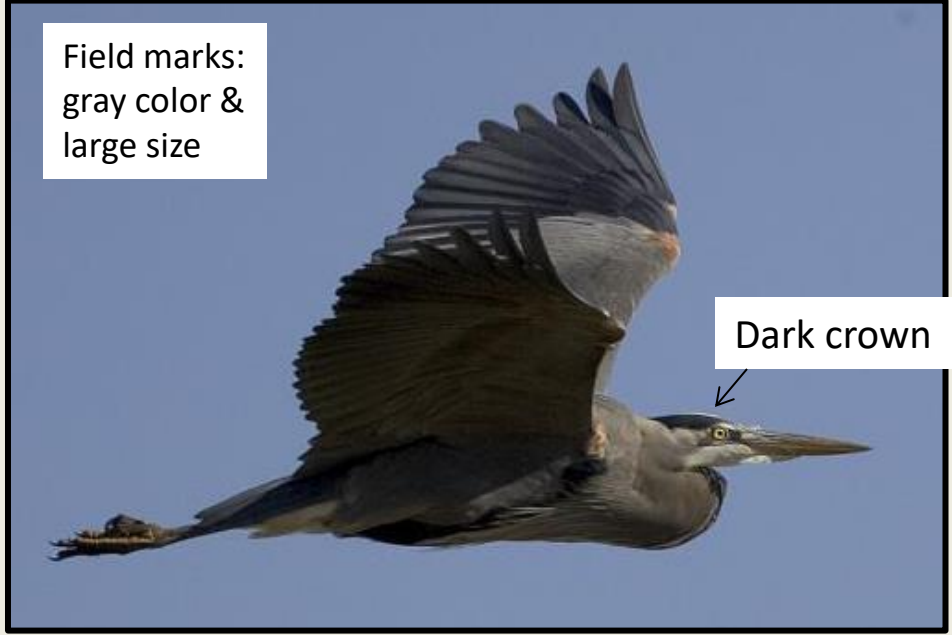


Length: 46 in. wingspan 72 in.

Habitat: open wetland habitats. Year-round resident
Food: fish and small animals.



Juvenile- gray overall



Field marks:
gray color &
large size

Dark crown



American dipper *Cinclus mexicanus*

Family Cinclidae. aquatic songbird able to walk and feed underwater. Has strong legs & toes and powerful short wings that allow foraging from rocks under the surface of fast-moving streams.

Habit of bobbing body up & down



Photo: Dave Chantler

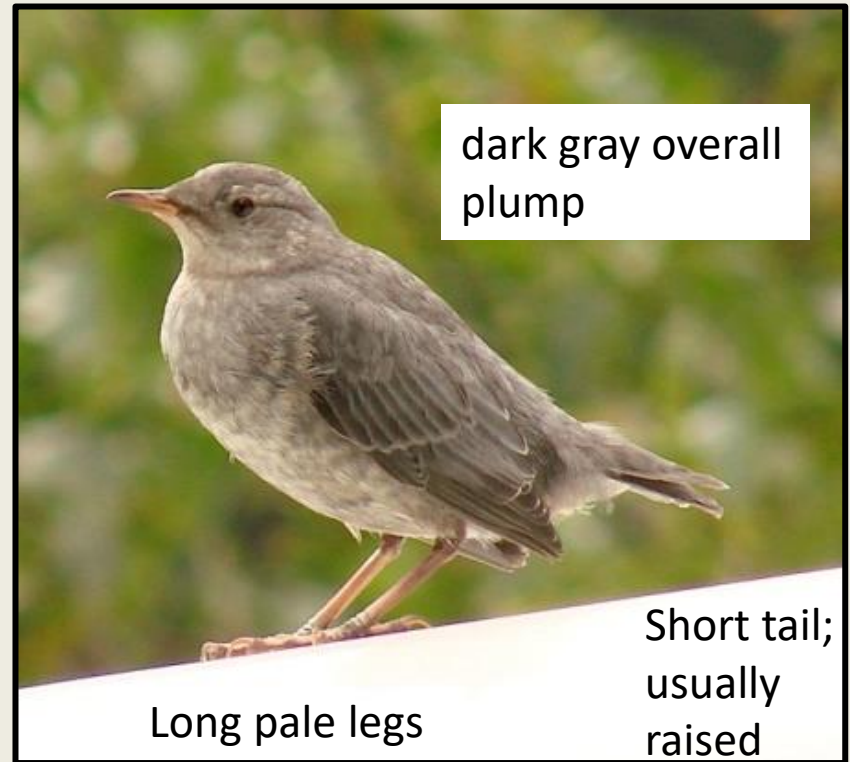


Photo: Lori Aylesworth

Habitat: fast-flowing streams

Food: aquatic insect larvae

Western meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta*

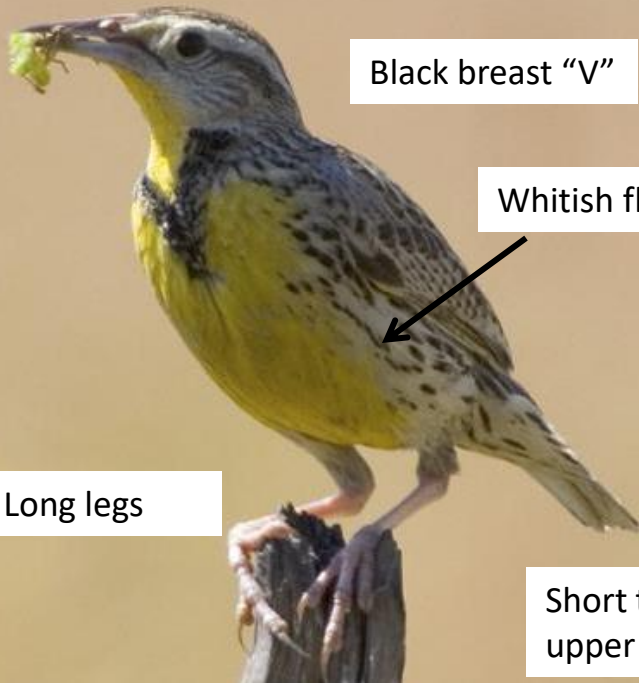


Blackbird (Icteridae) Family: Medium-to-large sized songbirds. Have strong direct flight, long heavy, pointed bills. Diverse group that includes orioles and blackbirds.

ID Features: pale grey/brown overall, 9.5 inches length (bill tip to tail), bright yellow underparts (often veiled in fall).

Habitat: Common in shrub-steppe & grasslands. Neotropical migrant to Mexico.

Food: insects, spiders, grass & wildflower seeds



Black breast "V"

Whitish flanks

Long legs



Short tail with white sides to outer upper tail features-visible in flight

Spotted towhee *Pipilo maculatus*

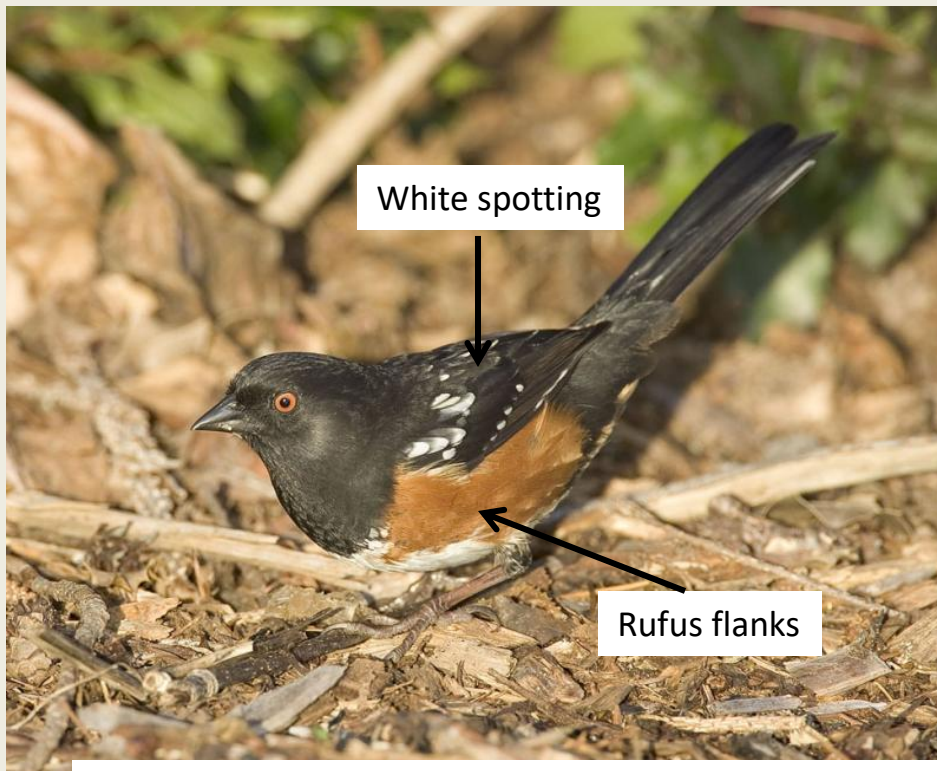


Emberizidae Family- 7 genera of sparrows. Mostly small, brown, streaked songbirds. All have short conical bills. Tend to change diet seasonally (insects in summer, seeds in winter).

ID Traits: Larger and stockier than sparrows, with a long tail. Black hood- dark grey-brown in females

Habitat: In shrublands, brush, & clearings. Forages on the ground by scratching in litter

Food: seeds, acorns, berries, and insects



Photos used with permission by Rod Gilbert, photographer: http://www.pbase.com/rodg/sparrows_and_allies

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*



Turdidae (Thrush) Family: Songbirds with short, blunt –tipped bills, relatively long legs.
Feed on insects & fruits.

Habitat: Common & widespread in North America- a generalist in many habitat types. Gathers in large flocks & communal roosts in winter. Robins are 10 inches long, tip of bill to tip of tail.

Dark head, with white pattern around the eye.

Dark gray above

Yellow bill

Rusty orange breast

Dark tail with white corners – may be lacking in Western U.S. populations



Food: Earthworms, snails, many fruits.

Stellar's jay *Cyanocitta stelleri*



Jays & Crows (Corvidae Family) large, sturdy songbirds with thick bills, strong legs, & loud voices. Noisy & aggressive; will mob predators. Usually travel in groups.

Photo by Rod Gilbert



Stellar's jay L 11.5 inches

Long crest

Paler overall & white marks on forehead of Interior West pop.

Short broad tail

Broad rounded wings

Wings, rump, belly, tail- bright blue

Head, breast, and back blackish

Photo by Rod Gilbert



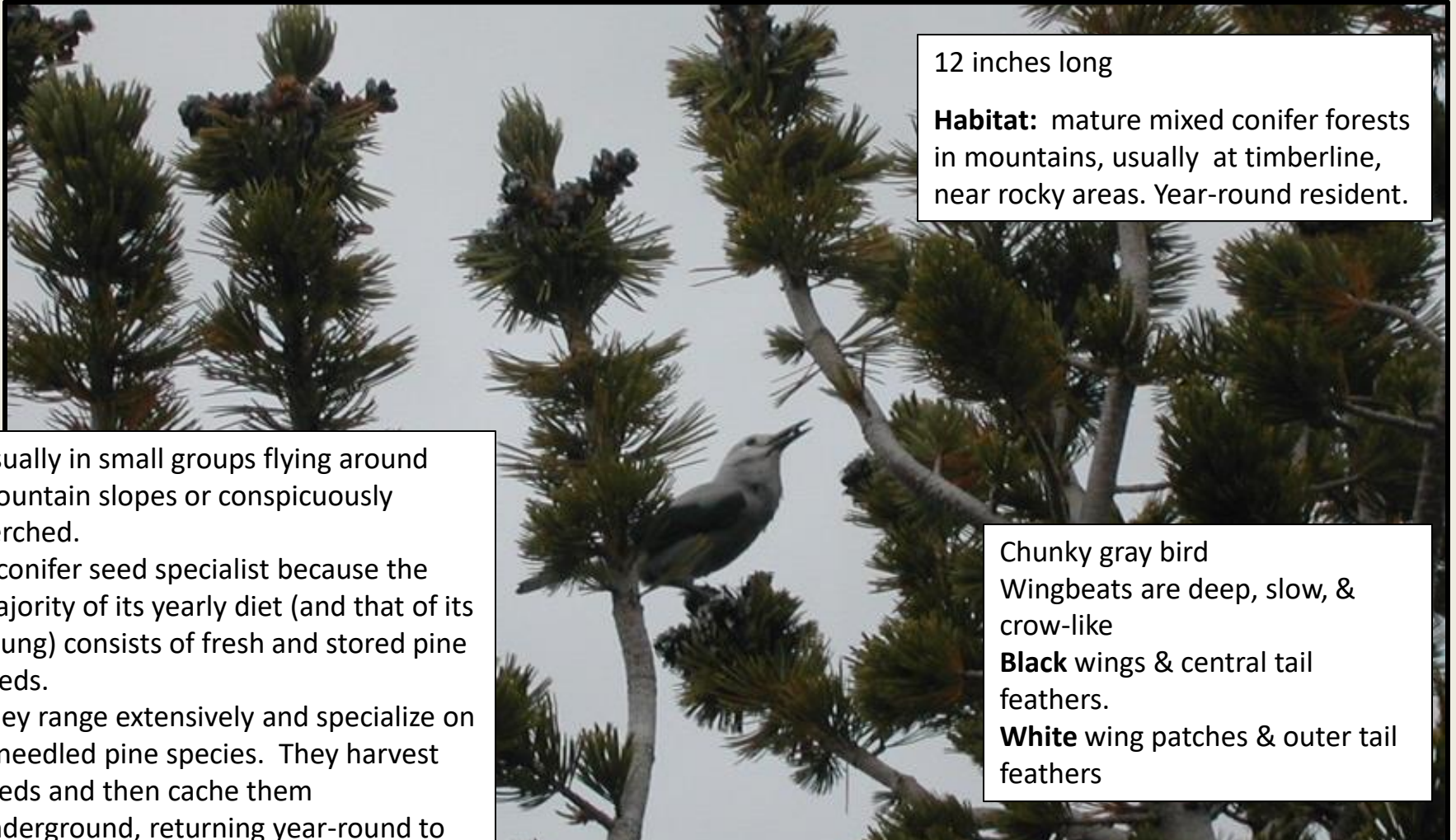
Habitat: Common year-round in conifer forests. Bold, aggressive, & noisy.

Food: insects, seeds, berries, nuts, small animals, eggs, and scavenge opportunistically from people

Nucifraga columbiana Clark's nutcracker



Jays & Crows (Corvidae Family) large, sturdy songbirds with thick bills, strong legs, & loud voices. Noisy & aggressive; will mob predators. Usually travel in groups



12 inches long

Habitat: mature mixed conifer forests in mountains, usually at timberline, near rocky areas. Year-round resident.

Usually in small groups flying around mountain slopes or conspicuously perched.

A conifer seed specialist because the majority of its yearly diet (and that of its young) consists of fresh and stored pine seeds.

They range extensively and specialize on 5-needled pine species. They harvest seeds and then cache them underground, returning year-round to dig-up stored seeds.

Chunky gray bird

Wingbeats are deep, slow, & crow-like

Black wings & central tail feathers.

White wing patches & outer tail feathers

Photo: Don Schaechtel. Clark's nutcracker harvesting white-barked pine seeds

Black-billed magpie *Pica hudsonia*



Jays & Crows (Corvidae Family) large, sturdy songbirds with thick bills, strong legs, & loud voices. Noisy & aggressive; will mob predators. Usually travel in groups.



Habitat: Common year-round in open forests and shrub-steppe, often along rivers and streams. Gregarious and noisy- often in groups.

Food: Widely varied: insects, carrion, small animals, some fruits and seeds. Mostly forages on the ground.

Turkey vulture *Cathartes aura*



New world vultures (Family Cathartidae) – All carrion eaters. Adaptions to this food source include a small, unfeathered head and a hooked bill .

Flight Field ID trait: Wings held in a shallow “V”- rocks gently side-to-side with little flapping; called a “dihedral” shape. Underwings distinctly 2-toned due to silvery flight feathers.

Habitat: open areas , low-to high elevations
Throughout the U.S. Migrates to southern US, Mexico & Central America for the winter.



rather long wings & tail

Distinctive flight: rocks side-to-side with little flapping; wings held upward in a shallow “V.”

When viewed from the ground in flight, dark wing linings contrast with lighter flight feathers

Feathers absent on head, skin is red

White bill



Food: any dead animal

Great-horned owl *Bubo virginiana*



Family Strigidae: mainly nocturnal predators with hooked bills, sharp talons, forward-facing eyes, & circular facial discs. Most roost during the day in dense vegetation. Have keen hearing & vision in low light. Eyes don't move in sockets; they rotate their head on flexible necks.

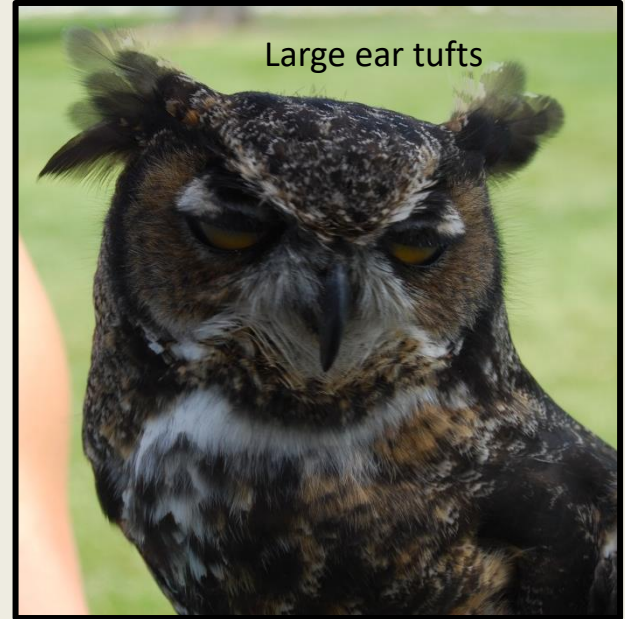


Bulky in size & shape;
White throat

Densely barred underside

Photos by Susan Ballinger

Form pairs (mid-Jan. to mid-Mar. Male selects nest site and attracts female by hooting. Nests in trees, caves, or on ground. Female incubates 1-4 eggs, & male feeds her during nesting. Eggs incubate for about 1 month, and chicks stay in nest for 6-10 weeks as they learn to fly. Both parents feed & tend young for many months.



Large ear tufts

Habitat: widely found from city, to forest, grasslands, & deserts. Common throughout North America year-round.

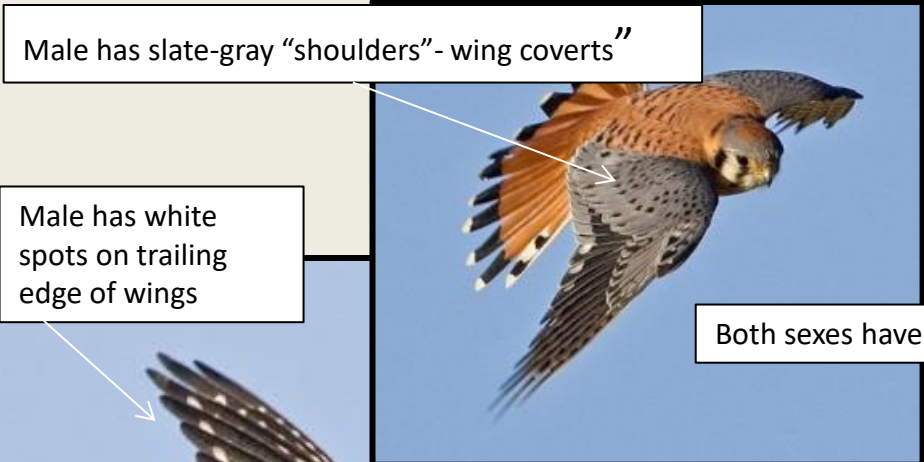


Eats: mammals like rabbits, rodents, & skunks and birds like quail, ducks, & smaller owls. Also, reptiles, amphibians, fish, & insects.

10.5 inches long-
smallest & most
common falcon.
Day-active

Falco sparverius American Kestrel

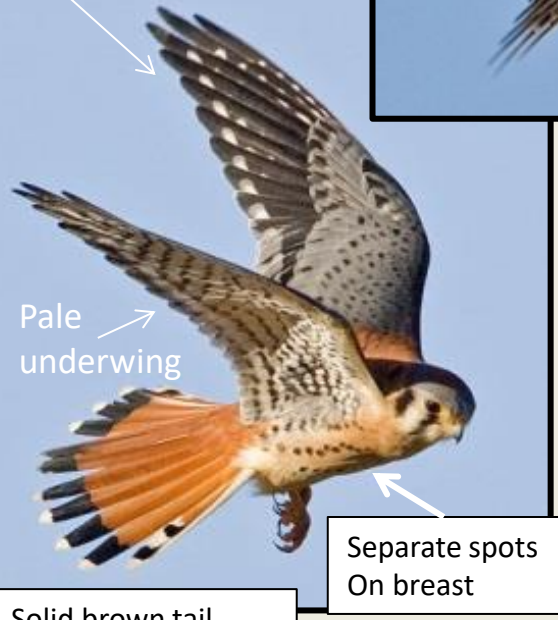
Family Falconidae: powerful hunters distinguished from hawks by long narrow & pointed wings, bent backwards at the wrist. Females larger than males. Kill prey using their notched bill to sever spinal cord at the neck



Male has slate-gray "shoulders" - wing covers"

Male has white spots on trailing edge of wings

Both sexes have: small & slim shape; long tail and angled wings; double face stripe



Pale underwing

Separate spots On breast

Found in open habitats, often seen on roadside wires or fence posts, pumping tail. Often hovers when hunting. Year-round resident.

Prey: insects & small mammals. In winter, also eats small birds

Solid brown tail With black bar at tip

2 Photos above of male: Rod Gilbert



Female has barred tail and back

Females has streaks on breast



3 photos of captive female (injured & used for education) by S. Ballinger

Belted kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon*



Kingfisher-family Alcedinidae Fish-eating birds found on sheltered waters. Search for prey from a lookout perch, hovers over water, then plunge-dive headfirst to capture fish. Voice-clattering rattle.

Shaggy crest Dark band on upper chest.
White collar Large bill Length: 13 inches

habitat: along water, both freshwater & marine. Year-round Resident in WA. Builds nests in vertical sandy-soil banks near water. **Food:** mostly fish & some aquatic invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, insects, young birds, mice. Rarely berries



male



female has additional rufous belt

Red-breasted nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*



Nuthatches (Sittidae family) small songbirds often in mixed flocks in woodlands. Cling to bark with legs & feet-can climb sideways or head-down. Eat insects, but in winter can consume seeds or nuts. Have long sharp bills

habitat: Conifer & mixed deciduous/conifer forests . Year-round resident in WA

food: Insects. In winter, may eat conifer seeds.

Dark eye-line & white eyebrow
Plain blue-grey above; Pale orange below
Short tail with white pattern Often perches on twigs Length: 4.5 inches



Photo by Rod Gilbert



Photo by Lori Aylesworth



Black-capped chickadee *Poecile atricapillus*

Paridae family (Chickadees)- small songbirds, often in mixed flocks searching woodlands for seeds & insects. Active birds-move nervously & acrobatically as they search vegetation for food. Short, strong bill. Frequents bird-feeders

all black cap & throat
white cheek
buffy flanks
white edged wing feathers



Photo by Lori Aylesworth

Length: 5.25 inches



Photo by Rod Gilbert

habitat: Conifer and Deciduous forests and in riparian woodlands.. Year-round resident. Forages in thickets and on low branches of trees.

Food: conifer seeds, fruits, spiders & their eggs

Dark-eyed junco *Junco hymnalis*



Emberizidae Family- 7 genera of sparrows. Mostly small, brown, streaked songbirds. All have short conical bills. Tend to change diet seasonally (insects in summer, seeds in winter).

Habitat: Altitudinal migrant in North Central Washington- winters in small flocks in shrub-steppe. Summers in mid-to-high elevation conifer forests. Forages on ground, frequents small shrubs. 6 subspecies groups in North America- in Washington, the “Oregon” *thurberi* subspecies. Forage on open ground, flying into brush when alarmed.

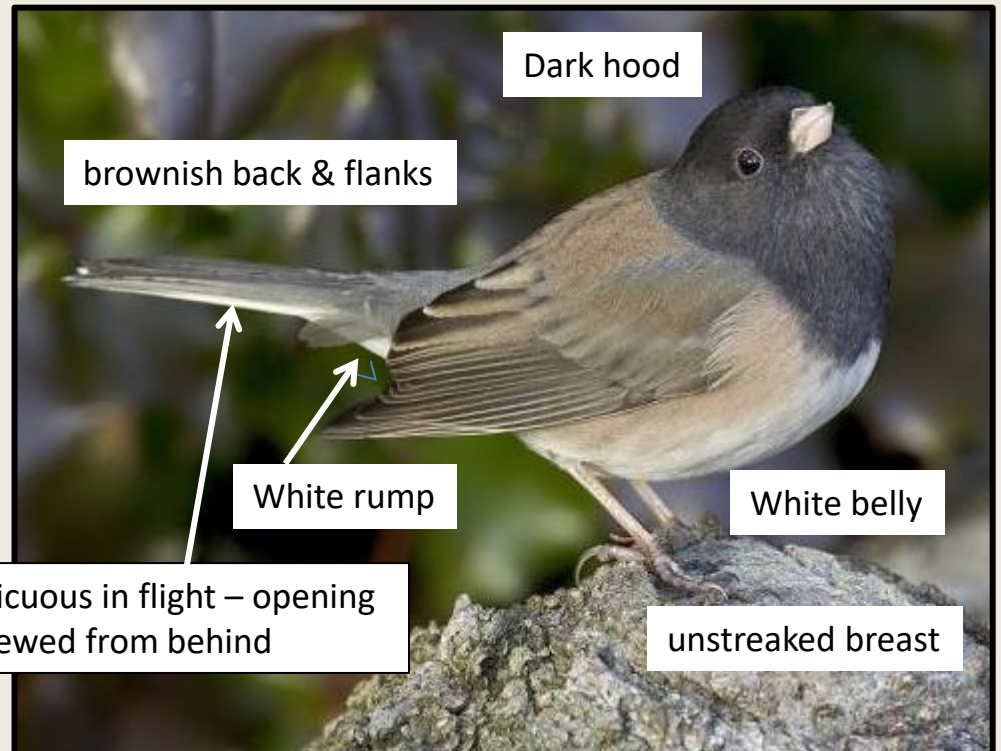
Food: insects, spiders, & a wide variety of seeds.

Dark-eyed junco Length 6.25 inches”

Short conical bill, pale pinkish



White outer tail feathers- conspicuous in flight – opening and closing like scissors when viewed from behind

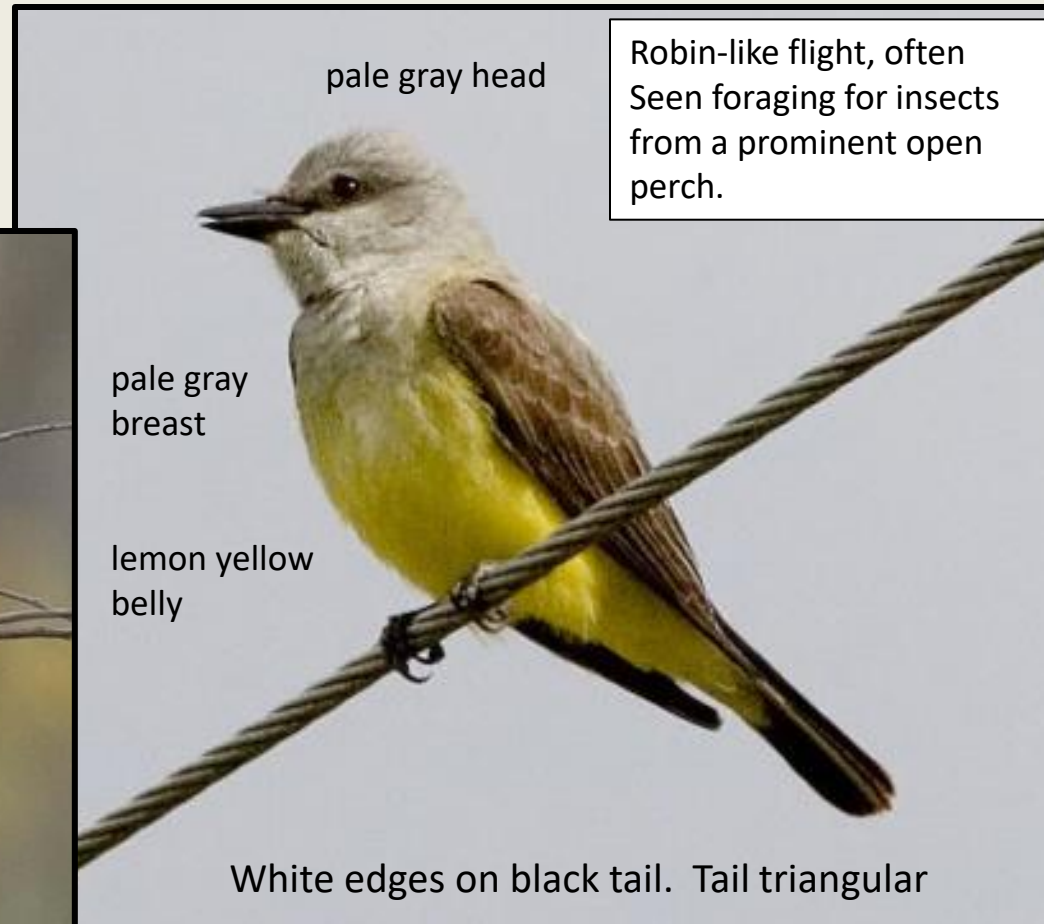


Western kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis*



Family Tyrannidae Tyrant Flycatchers Named for habit of catching flying insects midair, usually in a short flight from a perch. They perch upright while watching for prey. Flight is strong and agile with quick turns and abrupt movements. Most are drab with short, broad flattened bills. Most have a large head and bristly “whiskers.”

Habitat: common in dry open country with scattered trees, perching on fences and high wires. Solitary or in small family groups. Neo-tropical migrant.



Western tanager *Piranga ludoviciana*



Family Thraupidae: medium-sized birds with distinctive stout pointed bills.
All are brightly colored, mostly fruit-eating,
tropical birds

Generally solitary and stay within the foliage of trees, feeding on insects & fruit. Nests in conifer forests of our region, and migrates south to Central America for the winter.

Females are drabber, greenish-yellow
2 Wing bars are pale and thin



black back
Yellow rump

Upper wing bar yellow



Males have red on head

American wigeon *Anas americana*



Dabbling Ducks family Anatidae- puddle ducks. Mainly on smaller ponds & marshes in shallow water. Feed at surface by “dabbling” bill in the water. Can take off from water without running.

Female:

- Dark smudge around eye
- Weakly patterned flanks
- Gray-brown head

Rounded head

Small gray bill, usually

Tipped downward

Grazes in fields in flocks

Length 20”

Year-round resident in WA

Male:

- White or buffy forehead
- Distinctive dark green mask from eye to neck
- White wing patch
- White hip patch



female above left, male at right



male

Photos by Rod Gilbert

American coot *Fulica Americana*



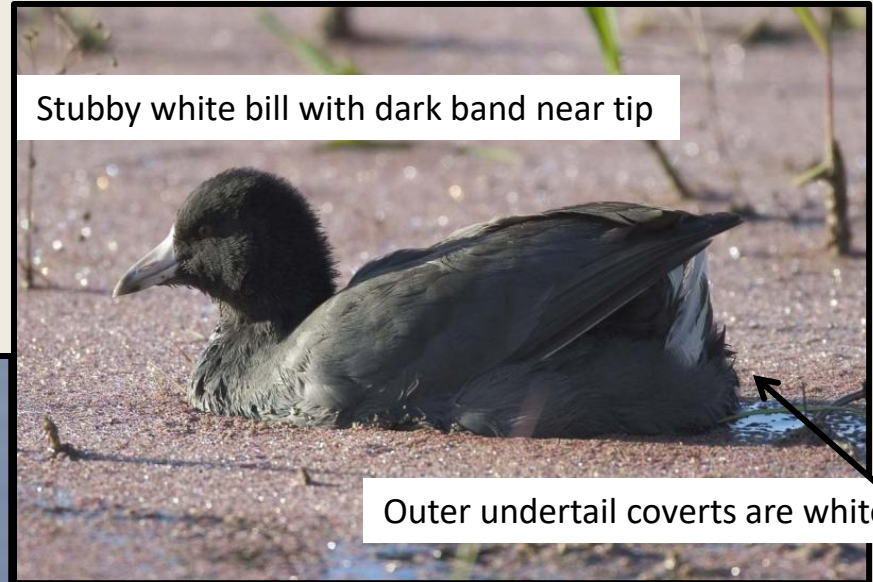
Family Ralidae (Rails, Gallinules, Coots): Marsh birds with short tails & short rounded wings.

Habitat: Common on ponds & marshes,
Often in large tight flocks on water & land.
Year-round resident.

Food: dives for submerged aquatic vegetation;
brings to the surface to eat. Grazes on grass.



Overall black- darkest on head & neck



Stubby white bill with dark band near tip

Outer undertail coverts are white

Legs: greenish-gray in juveniles, yellow to orange in adults

Lobed toes on large feet

Flight: Has a running take off, but then flies strongly.

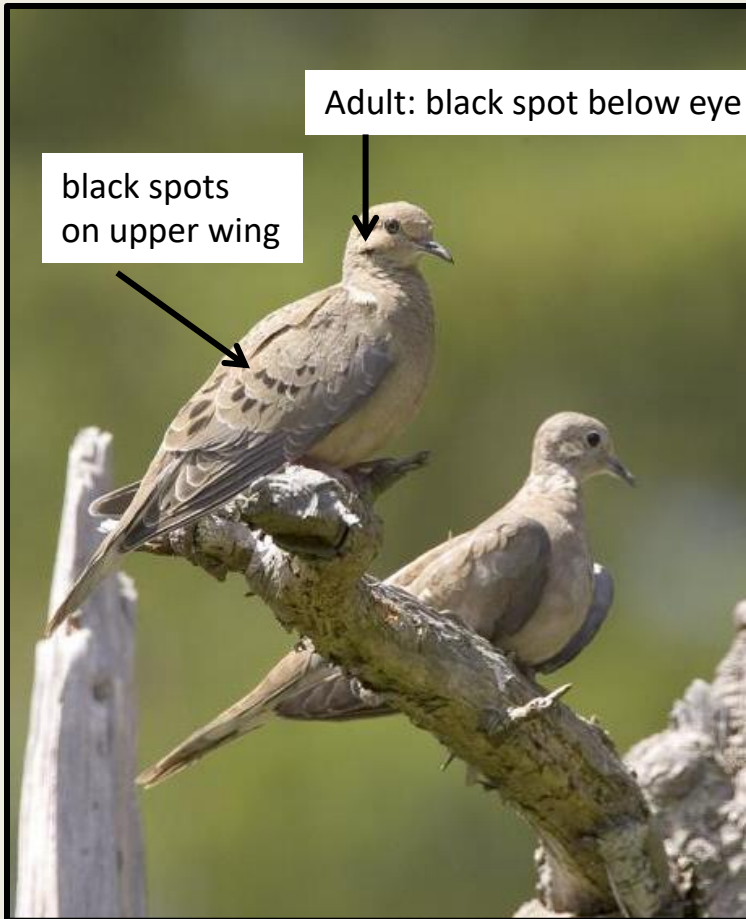
Often walks on lawns & golf courses to graze

Photos by Rod Gilbert

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*



Family Columbidae (Pigeons, doves): Have relatively small heads & bills & short legs. All are direct straight fliers and feed mainly on grains, seeds, & fruits. All give low “cooing” calls.

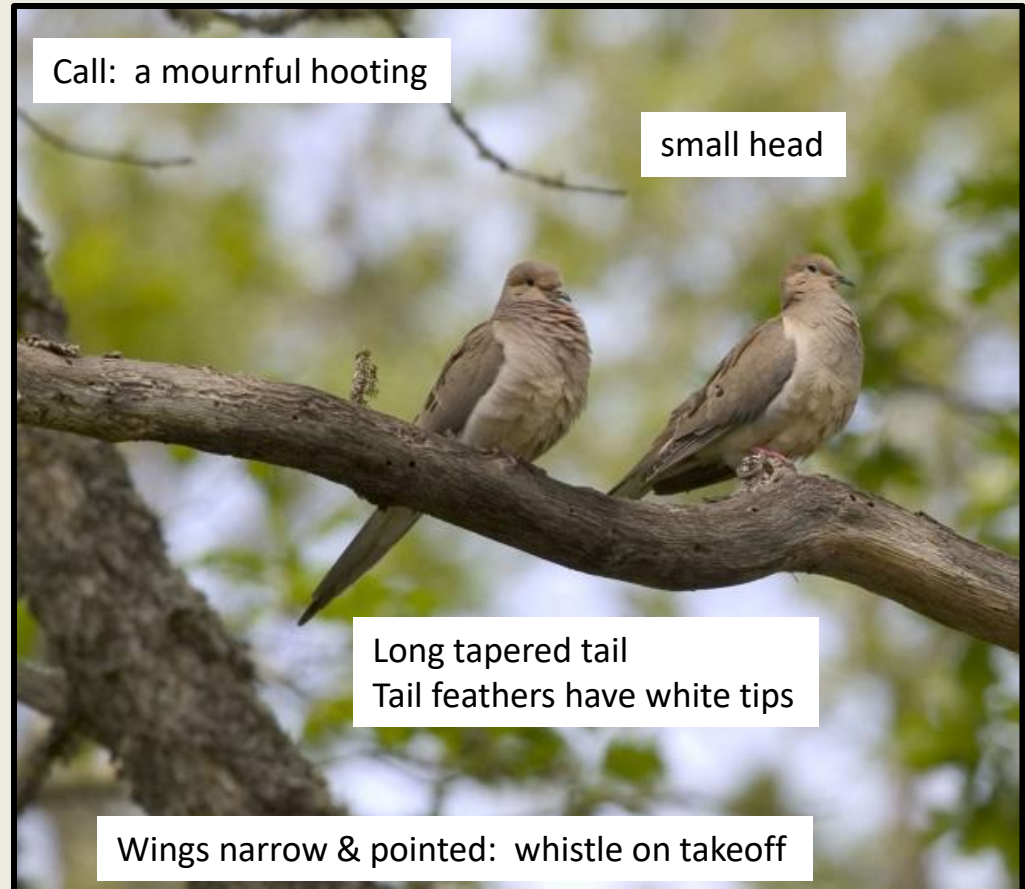


Adult: black spot below eye

black spots on upper wing

Food: seeds and grains. Often forages on the ground.

Habitat: common & widespread in suburban & agricultural lands with a mix of open ground & brushy cover. Usually in small groups. Often on overhead wires or on lawns. Year-round resident in WA.



Call: a mournful hooting

small head

Long tapered tail
Tail feathers have white tips

Wings narrow & pointed: whistle on takeoff