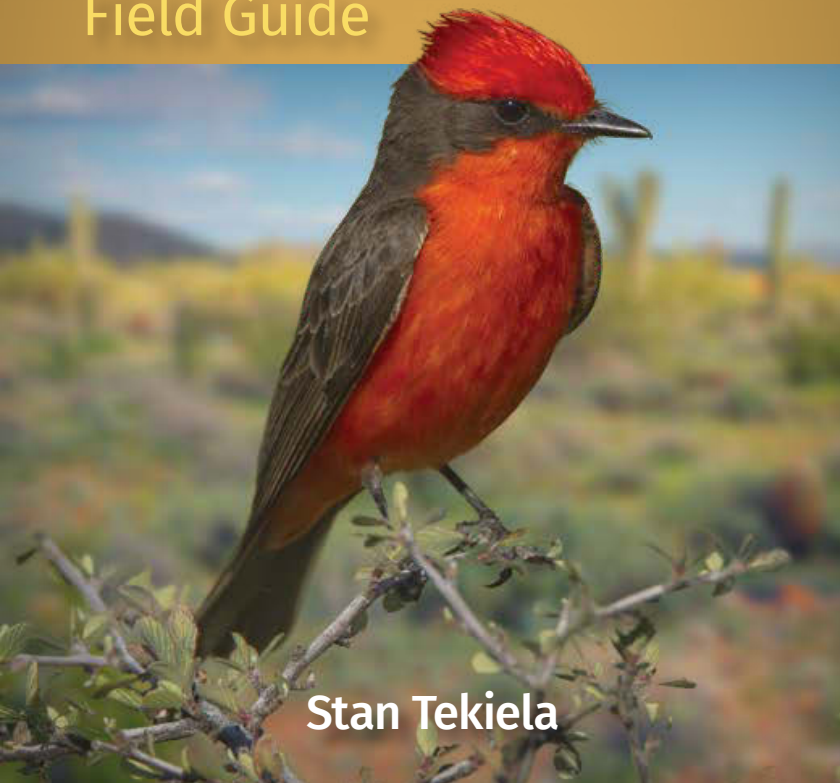


2ND EDITION

Birds *of* Arizona

Field Guide



Stan Tekiela

Birds that are mostly black p. 25

Birds that are mostly black and white p. 55

Birds that are mostly blue p. 85

Birds that are mostly brown p. 107

Birds that are mostly gray p. 225

Birds that have prominent green p. 313

Birds that have prominent orange p. 333

Birds that have prominent red p. 337

Birds that are mostly white p. 347

Birds that have prominent yellow p. 353

2ND EDITION

Birds *of* Arizona

Field Guide

Stan Tekiela

Adventure Publications
Cambridge, Minnesota

Edited by Sandy Livoti and Dan Downing

Cover, book design and illustrations by Jonathan Norberg

Range maps produced by Anthony Hertz

Cover photo: Vermilion Flycatcher by Stan Tekiela

All photos by Stan Tekiela except pp. 168, 372 (male) by **Agami Photo Agency/Shutterstock.com**; p. 364 (non-breeding male) by **Paul Bannick**; p. 238 (juvenile) by **Albert Barr/Shutterstock.com**; pp. 28, 146 (male) **Gualberto Becerra/Shutterstock.com**; pp. 86 (female), 120 (female), 154 (female), 154 (male), 324, 332 (both), 334 (both), 352 (female), 368 (both) by **Rick & Nora Bowers**; p. 166 by **Gerald A. DeBoer/Shutterstock.com**; p. 212 (soaring) by **Dudley Edmondson**; p. 228 (female) by **Kevin T. Karlson**; pp. 90 (female), 138 (female) by **Brian E. Kushner/Shutterstock.com**; p. 364 (female) by **M. Leonard Photography/Shutterstock.com**; p. 258 by **Laura Mountainspring/Shutterstock.com**; p. 318 (female) by **Thomas Morris/Shutterstock.com**; p. 56 by **A. G. Nelson/Dembinsky Photo Associates**; p. 164 by **G. Parekh/Shutterstock.com**; p. 252 by **Scenic Corner/Shutterstock.com**; p. 372 (female) by **Brian E. Small**; pp. 28 (female), 146 (female) by **Stubblefield Photography/Hartmut Walter**; pp. 52 (juvenile), 172 (in-flight juvenile & juvenile), 208 (dark morph, intermediate morph & soaring dark morph), 214 (juvenile), 220 (juvenile), 298 (juvenile), 300 (in-flight juvenile) by **Brian K. Wheeler**; and pp. 96, 116 (Oregon female), 206 (female), 272 (inset), 296, 302 (female), 358 (female) by **Jim Zipp**.

To the best of the publisher's knowledge, all photos were of live birds. Some were photographed in a controlled condition.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Birds of Arizona Field Guide

First Edition 2003

Second Edition 2021

Copyright © 2003 and 2021 by Stan Tekiela

Published by Adventure Publications

An imprint of AdventureKEEN

310 Garfield Street South

Cambridge, Minnesota 55008

(800) 678-7006

www.adventurepublications.net

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-64755-194-0 (pbk.); ISBN 978-1-64755-195-7 (ebook)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

What's New?	6
Why Watch Birds in Arizona?	7
Observe with a Strategy: Tips for Identifying Birds.	9
Bird Basics	12
Bird Color Variables	12
Bird Nests.	14
Who Builds the Nest?	17
Fledging.	17
Why Birds Migrate	17
How Do Birds Migrate?	19
How to Use This Guide	20
Range Maps.	21

Sample Pages	22-23
-------------------------------	-------

The Birds

Black	25
Black and White	55
Blue	85
Brown	107
Gray	225
Green	313
Orange	333
Red	337
White	347
Yellow	353

Birding on the Internet	378
--	-----

Checklist/Index by Species	379
---	-----

More for Arizona by Stan Tekiela	382
---	-----

About the Author	384
-----------------------------------	-----

WHAT'S NEW?

It is hard to believe that it's been more than 15 years since the debut of *Birds of Arizona Field Guide*. This critically acclaimed field guide has helped countless people identify and enjoy the birds that we love. Now, in this expanded second edition, *Birds of Arizona Field Guide* has many new and exciting changes and a fresh look, while retaining the same familiar, easy-to-use format.

To help you identify even more birds in Arizona, I have added 8 new species and more than 150 new color photographs. All of the range maps have been meticulously reviewed, and many updates have been made to reflect the ever-changing movements of the birds.

Everyone's favorite section, "Stan's Notes," has been expanded to include even more natural history information. "Compare" sections have been updated to help ensure that you correctly identify your bird, and additional feeder information has been added to help with bird feeding. I hope you will enjoy this great new edition as you continue to learn about and appreciate our Arizona birds!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stan", written in a cursive, flowing style.

WHY WATCH BIRDS IN ARIZONA?

Millions of people have discovered bird feeding. It's a simple and enjoyable way to bring the beauty of birds closer to your home. Watching birds at your feeder often leads to a lifetime pursuit of bird identification. The *Birds of Arizona Field Guide* is for those who want to identify common birds of Arizona.

There are over 1,100 species of birds found in North America. In Arizona alone there have been more than 350 different kinds of birds recorded through the years. These bird sightings were diligently recorded by hundreds of bird watchers and became part of the official state record. From these valuable records, I've chosen 153 of the most common birds of Arizona to include in this field guide.

Bird watching, or birding, is one of the most popular activities in America. Its outstanding appeal in Arizona is due, in part, to an unusually rich and abundant birdlife. Why are there so many birds? One reason is open space. Arizona is nearly 114,000 square miles (295,300 sq. km). Despite its size, only about 7 million people call Arizona home. On average, that is only 50 people per square mile (19 per sq. km). Most of these people are located in and around only two major cities located in southern Arizona.

Open space is not the only reason there is such an abundance of birds. It's also the diversity of habitat. Arizona can be broken into three distinct habitats—Colorado Plateau, Transition Zone and the Basin and Range Region—each of which supports different groups of birds.

The Colorado Plateau is located in the northern part of Arizona. It is a relatively flat, dry, semi-desert region with many rivers that have cut deep canyons. Elevation from the bottom of a canyon to its upper rim can change by as much as 5,000 feet (1,500 m). While the Grand Canyon is the most famous, equally

impressive are the Oak Creek Canyon and Canyon de Chelly, among others. The Colorado Plateau is the least inhabited part of the state, but it is one of the most beautiful. Ferruginous Hawks, Steller's Jays and many other birds live in this region.

The Transition Zone, formerly known as the Central Highlands, divides Arizona horizontally. Many mountain ranges here are in close proximity and appear as clusters of peaks interspersed with steep-walled valleys. This part of the state is a good place to see Vermilion Flycatchers and Pine Siskins.

South of the Transition Zone is the Basin and Range Region. This region covers most of southern Arizona and is known by most as the Sonoran Desert. The habitat is mainly flat desert separated by mountain ranges. It is a sparsely vegetated area that is home to many wonderful birds such as Black-throated Sparrows and various hummingbird species.

Water also plays a large part in Arizona's bird populations. There are more than 360 square miles (935 sq. km) of water surface in the state. From the Colorado River to the Gila and Salt Rivers, and from Lake Mead, the state's largest reservoir, to Lake Powell and Roosevelt Lake, this essential element supports a variety of water-loving birds such as Red-winged Blackbirds and American Avocets. It's always worth time to investigate any body of water in Arizona for the presence of birds.

Varying habitats in Arizona also mean variations in the weather. Since elevation rises from approximately 140 feet (40 m) to over 10,000 feet (3,050 m) at mountaintops, there are big differences in the weather from northern Arizona to the southern desert. Tall peaks, such as Mount Graham, are some of the coldest, snowiest places in Arizona, while the desert in the southeastern corner of the state remains relatively warm and dry most of the year.

No matter if you are in the hot, dry desert or in the cool, moist mountains of Arizona, there are birds to watch in each season. Whether witnessing hawks migrating in autumn or welcoming back hummingbirds in spring, there is variety and excitement in birding as each season turns to the next.

OBSERVE WITH A STRATEGY: TIPS FOR IDENTIFYING BIRDS

Identifying birds isn't as difficult as you might think. By simply following a few basic strategies, you can increase your chances of successfully identifying most birds that you see. One of the first and easiest things to do when you see a new bird is to note **its color**. This field guide is organized by color, so simply turn to the right color section to find it.

Next, note the **size of the bird**. A strategy to quickly estimate size is to compare different birds. Pick a small, a medium and a large bird. Select an American Robin as the medium bird. Measured from bill tip to tail tip, a robin is 10 inches (25 cm). Now select two other birds, one smaller and one larger. Good choices are a House Sparrow, at about 6 inches (15 cm), and an American Crow, around 18 inches (45 cm). When you see a species you don't know, you can now quickly ask yourself, "Is it larger than a sparrow but smaller than a robin?" When you look in your field guide to identify your bird, you would check the species that are roughly 6–10 inches (15–25 cm). This will help to narrow your choices.

Next, note the **size, shape and color of the bill**. Is it long or short, thick or thin, pointed or blunt, curved or straight? Seed-eating birds, such as Evening Grosbeaks, have bills that are thick and strong enough to crack even the toughest seeds. Birds that sip nectar, such as Black-chinned Hummingbirds, need long, thin bills to reach deep into flowers. Hawks and owls tear their prey

with very sharp, curving bills. Sometimes, just noting the bill shape can help you decide whether the bird is a woodpecker, finch, grosbeak, blackbird or bird of prey.

Next, take a look around and note the **habitat** in which you see the bird. Is it wading in a saltwater marsh? Walking along a riverbank or on the beach? Soaring in the sky? Is it perched high in the trees or hopping along the forest floor? Because of diet and habitat preferences, you'll often see robins hopping on the ground but not usually eating seeds at a feeder. Or you'll see a Black-headed Grosbeak sitting on a tree branch but not climbing headfirst down the trunk, like a Red-breasted Nuthatch would.

Noticing **what the bird is eating** will give you another clue to help you identify the species. Feeding is a big part of any bird's life. Fully one-third of all bird activity revolves around searching for food, catching prey and eating. While birds don't always follow all the rules of their diet, you can make some general assumptions. Northern Flickers, for instance, feed on ants and other insects, so you wouldn't expect to see them visiting a seed feeder. Other birds, such as Barn and Cliff Swallows, eat flying insects and spend hours swooping and diving to catch a meal.

Sometimes you can identify a bird by **the way it perches**. Body posture can help you differentiate between an American Crow and a Red-tailed Hawk, for example. Crows lean forward over their feet on a branch, while hawks perch in a vertical position. Consider posture the next time you see an unidentified large bird in a tree.

Birds in flight are harder to identify, but noting the **wing size and shape** will help. Wing size is in direct proportion to body size, weight and type of flight. Wing shape determines whether the bird flies fast and with precision, or slowly and

less precisely. Barn Swallows, for instance, have short, pointed wings that slice through the air, enabling swift, accurate flight. Turkey Vultures have long, broad wings for soaring on warm updrafts. House Finches have short, rounded wings, helping them to flit through thick tangles of branches.

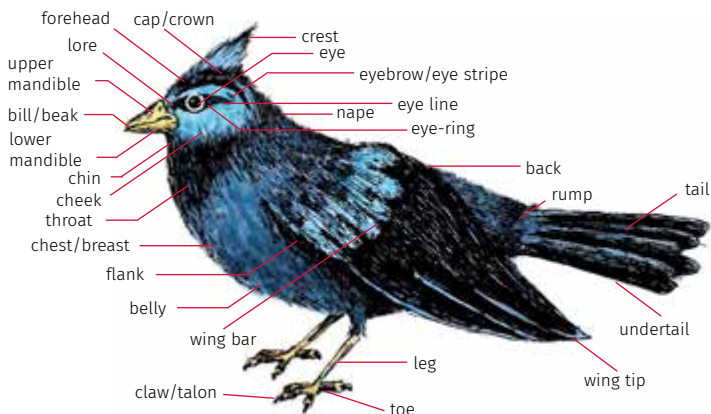
Some bird species have a unique **pattern of flight** that can help in identification. American Goldfinches fly in a distinctive undulating pattern that makes it look like they're riding a roller coaster.

While it's not easy to make all of these observations in the short time you often have to watch a "mystery" bird, practicing these identification methods will greatly expand your birding skills. To further improve your skills, seek the guidance of a more experienced birder who can answer your questions on the spot.

BIRD BASICS

It's easier to identify birds and communicate about them if you know the names of the different parts of a bird. For instance, it's more effective to use the word "crest" to indicate the set of extra-long feathers on top of the head of a Steller's Jay than to try to describe it.

The following illustration points out the basic parts of a bird. Because it is a composite of many birds, it shouldn't be confused with any actual bird.



Bird Color Variables

No other animal has a color palette like a bird's. Brilliant blues, lemon yellows, showy reds and iridescent greens are common in the bird world. In general, male birds are more colorful than their female counterparts. This helps males attract a mate, essentially saying, "Hey, look at me!" Color calls attention to a male's health as well. The better the condition of his feathers, the better his food source, territory and potential for mating.

Male and female birds that don't look like each other are called sexually dimorphic, meaning "two forms." Dimorphic females often have a nondescript dull color, as seen in Lazuli Buntings. Muted tones help females hide during the weeks of motionless incubation and draw less attention to them when they're out feeding or taking a break from the rigors of raising the young.

The males of some species, such as the Hairy Woodpecker, Steller's Jay and Bald Eagle, look nearly identical to the females. In woodpeckers, the sexes are differentiated by only a red mark, or sometimes a yellow mark. Depending on the species, the mark may be on top of the head, on the face or nape of neck, or just behind the bill.

During the first year, juvenile birds often look like their mothers. Since brightly colored feathers are used mainly for attracting a mate, young non-breeding males don't have a need for colorful plumage. It's not until the first spring molt (or several years later, depending on the species) that young males obtain their breeding colors.

Both breeding and winter plumages are the result of molting. Molting is the process of dropping old, worn feathers and replacing them with new ones. All birds molt, typically twice a year, with the spring molt usually occurring in late winter. At this time, most birds produce their brighter breeding plumage, which lasts throughout the summer.

Winter plumage is the result of the late summer molt, which serves a couple of important functions. First, it adds feathers for warmth in the coming winter season. Second, in some species it produces feathers that tend to be drab in color, which helps to camouflage the birds and hide them from predators. The winter plumage of the male American Goldfinch, for example, is olive-brown, unlike its canary-yellow breeding color during summer. Luckily for us, some birds, such as the male Lewis's Woodpeckers, retain their bright summer colors all year long.

Bird Nests

Bird nests are a true feat of engineering. Imagine constructing a home that's strong enough to weather storms, large enough to hold your entire family, insulated enough to shelter them from cold and heat, and waterproof enough to keep out rain. Think about building it without blueprints or directions and using mainly your feet. Birds do this!

Before building, birds must select an appropriate site. In some species, such as the House Wren, the male picks out several potential sites and assembles small twigs in each. The "extra" nests, called dummy nests, discourage other birds from using any nearby cavities for their nests. The male takes the female around and shows her the choices. After choosing her favorite, she finishes the construction.

In other species, such as the Bullock's Oriole, the female selects the site and builds the nest, while the male offers an occasional suggestion. Each bird species has its own nest-building routine that is strictly followed.

As you can see in these illustrations, birds build a wide variety of nest types.



**ground
nest**



**platform
nest**



**cup
nest**



**pendulous
nest**



**cavity
nest**

Nesting material often consists of natural items found in the immediate area. Most nests consist of plant fibers (such as bark from grapevines), sticks, mud, dried grass, feathers, fur, or

soft, fuzzy tufts from thistle. Some birds, including Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, use spiderwebs to glue nest materials together.

Transportation of nesting material is limited to the amount a bird can hold or carry. Birds must make many trips afield to gather enough material to complete a nest. Most nests take four days or more, and hundreds, if not thousands, of trips to build.

A **ground nest** can be a mound of vegetation on the ground or in the water. It can also be just a simple, shallow depression scraped out in earth, stones or sand. Killdeer and Horned Larks scrape out ground nests without adding any nesting material.

The **platform nest** represents a much more complex type of construction. Typically built with twigs or sticks and branches, this nest forms a platform and has a depression in the center to nestle the eggs. Platform nests can be in trees; on balconies, cliffs, bridges, or man-made platforms; and even in flowerpots. They often provide space for the adventurous young and function as a landing platform for the parents.

Mourning Doves and herons don't anchor their platform nests to trees, so these can tumble from branches during high winds and storms. Hawks, eagles, ospreys and other birds construct sturdier platform nests with large sticks and branches.

Other platform nests are constructed on the ground with mud, grass and other vegetation from the area. Many waterfowl build platform nests on the ground near or in water. A **floating platform nest** moves with the water level, preventing the nest, eggs and birds from being flooded.

Three-quarters of all songbirds construct a **cup nest**, which is a modified platform nest. The supporting platform is built first and attached firmly to a tree, shrub, or rock ledge or the ground. Next, the sides are constructed with grass, small twigs, bark or leaves, which are woven together and often glued with mud for

added strength. The inner cup can be lined with down feathers, animal fur or hair, or soft plant materials and is contoured last.

The **pendulous nest** is an unusual nest that looks like a sock hanging from a branch. Attached to the end of small branches of trees, this unique nest is inaccessible to most predators and often waves wildly in a breeze.

Woven tightly with plant fibers, the pendulous nest is strong and watertight and takes up to a week to build. A small opening at the top or on the side allows parents access to the grass-lined interior. More commonly used by tropical birds, this complex nest has also been mastered by orioles and kinglets. It must be one heck of a ride to be inside one of these nests during a windy spring thunderstorm!

The **cavity nest** is used by many species of birds, most notably woodpeckers and Western Bluebirds. A cavity nest is often excavated from a branch or tree trunk and offers shelter from storms, sun, cold and predators. A small entrance hole in a tree can lead to a nest chamber that is up to a safe 10 inches (25 cm) deep.

Typically made by woodpeckers, cavity nests are usually used only once by the builder. Nest cavities can be used for many subsequent years by birds such as bluebirds, which do not have the capability to excavate their own. Kingfishers, on the other hand, can dig a tunnel up to 4 feet (about 1 m) long in a riverbank. The nest chamber at the end of the tunnel is already well insulated, so it's usually only sparsely lined.

One of the most clever of all nests is the **no nest**, or daycare nest. Parasitic birds, such as cowbirds, don't build their own nests. Instead, the egg-laden female searches out the nest of another bird and sneaks in to lay an egg while the host mother isn't looking.

A mother cowbird wastes no energy building a nest only to have it raided by a predator. Laying her eggs in the nests of other birds transfers the responsibility of raising her young to the host. When she lays her eggs in several nests, the chances increase that at least one of her babies will live to maturity.

Who Builds the Nest?

Generally, the female bird constructs the nest. She gathers the materials and does the building, with an occasional visit from her mate to check on progress. In some species, both parents contribute equally to nest building. The male may forage for sticks, grass or mud, but it is the female that often fashions the nest. Only rarely does a male build a nest by himself.

Fledging

Fledging is the time between hatching and flight, or leaving the nest. Some species of birds are **precocial**, meaning they leave the nest within hours of hatching, though it may be weeks before they can fly. This is common in waterfowl and shorebirds.

Baby birds that hatch naked and blind need to stay in the nest for a few weeks (these birds are **altricial**). Baby birds that are still in the nest are **nestlings**. Until birds start to fly, they are called **fledglings**.

Why Birds Migrate

Why do so many species of birds migrate? The short answer is simple: food. Birds migrate to locations with abundant food, as it is easier to breed where there is food than where food is scarce. Western Tanagers, for instance, are **complete migrators** that fly from the tropics of Central America and Mexico to nest in the forests of North America, where billions of newly hatched insects are available to feed to their young.

Other migrators, such as some birds of prey, migrate back to northern regions in spring. In these locations, they hunt mice, voles and other small rodents that are beginning to breed.

Complete migrators have a set time and pattern of migration. Every year at nearly the same time, they head to a specific wintering ground. Complete migrators may travel great distances, sometimes 15,000 miles (24,100 km) or more in one year.

Complete migration doesn't necessarily imply flying from the cold, frozen northland to a tropical destination. The Swainson's Hawk, for example, is a complete migrator that flies from Arizona to Central and South America. This trip is still considered complete migration.

Complete migrators have many interesting aspects. In spring, males often leave a few weeks before the females, arriving early to scope out possibilities for nesting sites and food sources, and to begin to defend territories. The females arrive several weeks later. In many species, the females and their young leave earlier in the fall, often up to four weeks before the adult males.

Other species, such as the American Goldfinch, are **partial migrators**. These birds usually wait until their food supplies dwindle before flying south. Unlike complete migrators, partial migrators move only far enough south, or sometimes east and west, to find abundant food. In some years it might be only a few hundred miles, while in other years it can be as much as a thousand. This kind of migration, dependent on weather and the availability of food, is sometimes called seasonal movement.

Unlike the predictable complete migrators or partial migrators, **irruptive migrators** can move every third to fifth year or, in some cases, in consecutive years. These migrations are triggered when times are tough and food is scarce. Red-breasted Nuthatches

are irruptive migrators. They leave their normal northern range in search of more food or in response to overpopulation.

Many other birds don't migrate at all. Mountain Chickadees, for example, are **non-migrators** that remain in their habitat all year long and just move around as necessary to find food.

How Do Birds Migrate?

One of the many secrets of migration is fat. While most people are fighting the ongoing battle of the bulge, birds intentionally gorge themselves to gain as much fat as possible without losing the ability to fly. Fat provides the greatest amount of energy per unit of weight. In the same way that your car needs gas, birds are propelled by fat and stall without it.

During long migratory flights, fat deposits are used up quickly, and birds need to stop to refuel. This is when backyard bird feeding stations and undeveloped, natural spaces around our towns and cities are especially important. Some birds require up to 2–3 days of constant feeding to build their fat reserves before continuing their seasonal trip.

Many birds, such as most eagles, hawks, ospreys, falcons and vultures, migrate during the day. Larger birds can hold more body fat, go longer without eating and take longer to migrate. These birds glide along on rising columns of warm air, called thermals, that hold them aloft while they slowly make their way north or south. They generally rest at night and hunt early in the morning before the sun has a chance to warm the land and create good soaring conditions. Daytime migrators use a combination of landforms, rivers, and the rising and setting sun to guide them in the right direction.

The majority of small birds, called **passerines**, migrate at night. Studies show that some use the stars to navigate. Others use

the setting sun, and still others, such as pigeons, use Earth's magnetic field to guide them north or south.

While flying at night may not seem like a good idea, it's actually safer. First, there are fewer avian predators hunting for birds at night. Second, night travel allows time during the day to find food in unfamiliar surroundings. Third, wind patterns at night tend to be flat, or laminar. Flat winds don't have the turbulence of daytime winds and can help push the smaller birds along.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

To help you quickly and easily identify birds, this field guide is organized by color. Refer to the color key on the first page, note the color of the bird, and turn to that section. For example, the Red-naped Sapsucker is black and white with red on its head. Because the bird is mostly black-and-white, it will be found in the black-and-white section.

Each color section is also arranged by size, generally with the smaller birds first. Sections may also incorporate the average size in a range, which in some cases reflects size differences between male and female birds. Flip through the pages in the color section to find the bird. If you already know the name of the bird, check the index for the page number.

In some species, the male and female are very different in color. In others, the breeding and winter plumage colors differ. These species will have an inset photograph with a page reference and will be found in two color sections.

You will find a variety of information in the bird description sections. To learn more, turn to the sample on pp. 22–23.

Range Maps

Range maps are included for each bird. Colored areas indicate where the bird is frequently found. The colors represent the presence of a species during a specific season, not the density, or amount, of birds in the area. Green is used for summer, blue for winter, red for year-round and yellow for migration.

While every effort has been made to depict accurate ranges, these are constantly in flux due to a variety of factors. Changing weather, habitat, species abundance and availability of vital resources, such as food and water, can affect the migration and movement of local populations, causing birds to be found in areas that are atypical for the species. So please use the maps as intended—as general guides only.

male

female
p. 119

sample
page



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER
MIGRATION
WINTER

Common Name

Range Map *Scientific name* Color Indicator

Size: measurement is from head to tip of tail; wingspan may be listed as well

Male: brief description of the male bird; may include breeding, winter or other plumages

Female: brief description of the female bird, which is sometimes different from the male

Juvenile: brief description of the juvenile bird, which often looks like the adult female

Nest: kind of nest the bird builds to raise its young; who builds it; number of broods per year

Eggs: number of eggs you might expect to see in a nest; color and marking

Incubation: average days the parents spend incubating the eggs; who does the incubation

Fledging: average days the young spend in the nest after hatching but before they leave the nest; who does the most “childcare” and feeding

Migration: type of migrator: complete (seasonal, consistent), partial (seasonal, destination varies), irruptive (unpredictable, depends on the food supply) or non-migrator

Food: what the bird eats most of the time (e.g., seeds, insects, fruit, nectar, small mammals, fish) and whether it typically comes to a bird feeder

Compare: notes about other birds that look similar and the pages on which they can be found; may include extra information to aid in identification

Stan's Notes: Interesting natural history information. This could be something to look or listen for or something to help positively identify the bird. Also includes remarkable features.





YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER
WINTER

Brown-headed Cowbird

Molothrus ater

Size: 7½" (19 cm)

Male: Glossy black with a chocolate-brown head. Dark eyes. Pointed, sharp gray bill.

Female: dull brown with a pointed, sharp, gray bill

Juvenile: similar to female but with dull-gray plumage and a streaked chest

Nest: no nest; lays eggs in nests of other birds

Eggs: 5–7; white with brown markings

Incubation: 10–13 days; host birds incubate eggs

Fledging: 10–11 days; host birds feed the young

Migration: partial to non-migrator in Arizona

Food: insects, seeds; will come to seed feeders

Compare: Male Bronzed Cowbird (p. 29) is slightly larger and has bright-red eyes. The male Red-winged Blackbird (p. 35) is slightly larger with red-and-yellow patches on upper wings. European Starling (p. 27) has a shorter tail.

Stan's Notes: Cowbirds are members of the blackbird family. Of approximately 750 species of parasitic birds worldwide, this is one of two parasitic birds on the state. Brood parasites lay their eggs in the nests of other birds, leaving the host birds to raise their young. Cowbirds are known to have laid their eggs in the nests of over 200 species of birds. While some birds reject cowbird eggs, most incubate them and raise the young, even to the exclusion of their own. Look for warblers and other birds feeding young birds twice their own size. Named "Cowbird" for its habit of following bison and cattle herds to feed on insects flushed up by the animals.



breeding



winter



YEAR-ROUND

European Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

Size: 7½" (19 cm)

Male: Glittering, iridescent purplish black in spring and summer; duller and speckled with white in fall and winter. Long, pointed, yellow bill in spring; gray in fall. Pointed wings. Short tail.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adults, with grayish-brown plumage and a streaked chest

Nest: cavity; male and female line cavity;
2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–6; bluish with brown markings

Incubation: 12–14 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 18–20 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator

Food: insects, seeds, fruit; visits seed or suet feeders

Compare: The male Brown-headed Cowbird (p. 25) has a brown head. Look for the shiny, dark feathers to help identify the European Starling.

Stan's Notes: A great songster, this bird can also mimic the songs of up to 20 bird species and imitates sounds, including the human voice. Jaws are more powerful when opening than when closing, enabling the bird to pry open crevices to find insects. Often displaces woodpeckers, chickadees and other cavity-nesting birds. Large families gather with blackbirds in the fall. Not a native bird; 100 starlings were introduced to New York City in 1890–91 from Europe. Bill changes color in spring and fall.



female
p. 147



juvenile



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER
MIGRATION

Bronzed Cowbird

Molothrus aeneus

Size: 8" (20 cm)

Male: Black plumage with glossy blue wings and tail. A thick, pointed, slightly down-curved black bill. Bright-red eyes. Short tail.

Female: overall dull brown-to-gray bird with darker brown wings and tail, a thick, pointed and slightly downward-curving gray bill, bright-red eyes, short tail

Juvenile: similar to female, but dull-red eyes and bill is lighter in color

Nest: no nest; lays eggs in nests of other birds

Eggs: 5-7; pale bluish green without markings

Incubation: 10-12 days; host bird incubates eggs

Fledging: 10-11 days; host birds feed young

Migration: complete migrator, to Mexico; some stay year-round in a small part of Arizona

Food: insects, seeds; comes to ground feeders

Compare: Similar to the male Brown-headed Cowbird (p. 25), which has a brown head and lacks the Bronzed Cowbird's bright-red eyes.

Stan's Notes: One of two parasitic bird species in Arizona. Adults are easy to identify and differentiate from other birds by their bright red eyes. During courtship, male throws head back, ruffles feathers and bounces up and down in front of female. Usually seen in small flocks with other species. Most are migrators, but some remain in southwestern Arizona. Known to parasitize over 70 species of birds. Female pierces host bird's eggs, which kills the young, then lays her eggs in the nest. Some birds reject cowbird eggs, but most incubate them and raise the young, even to the exclusion of their own.



male



female
p. 267



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER
WINTER

Phainopepla

Phainopepla nitens

Size: 8" (20 cm)

Male: Slim, long, glossy black bird with a ragged crest and deep red eyes. Wing patches near tips of wings are white, obvious in flight.

Female: slim, long, mostly gray bird with a ragged crest and deep red eyes, whitish wing bars

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female and male construct; 1-2 broods per year

Eggs: 2-4; gray with brown markings

Incubation: 12-14 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 18-20 days; female and male feed young

Migration: complete, to southern Arizona and California

Food: fruit (usually mistletoe), insects; will come to water elements or water drips in yards

Compare: The only all-black bird with a crest and red eyes. Look for white wing patches in flight.

Stan's Notes: Seen in desert scrub with water and mistletoe nearby. Gives a low, liquid "kweer" song, but will also mimic other species. In winter, individuals defend food supply, such as a single tree with abundant mistletoe berries. Probably responsible for the dispersal of mistletoe plants far and wide. Male will fly up to a height of 300 feet (90 m), circling and zigzagging to court female. Builds nest of twigs and plant fibers and binds it with spider webs in the crotch of a mistletoe cluster. Lines nest with hair or soft plant fibers. May be the only species to nest in two regions in the same nesting season. Nests in dry desert habitat in early spring, and when it gets hot, moves to a higher area with an abundant water supply to nest again.





YEAR-ROUND
WINTER

Spotted Towhee

Pipilo maculatus

Size: 8½" (22 cm)

Male: Mostly black with dirty red-brown sides and a white belly. Multiple white spots on wings and sides. Long black tail with a white tip. Rich, red eyes.

Female: very similar to male but with a brown head

Juvenile: brown with a heavily streaked chest

Nest: cup; female builds; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 3–5; white with brown markings

Incubation: 12–14 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 10–12 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator; moves around in winter to find food

Food: seeds, fruit, insects

Compare: Closely related to the Green-tailed Towhee (p. 323), which lacks the bold black and red colors. American Robin (p. 279) is larger.

Stan's Notes: Not as common as the Green-tailed Towhee, but it inhabits similar habitat. Found in a variety of habitats, from thick brush and chaparral to suburban backyards. Usually heard noisily scratching through dead leaves on the ground for food. Over 70 percent of its diet is plant material. Eats more insects during spring and summer. Well known to retreat from danger by walking away rather than taking to flight. Nest is nearly always on the ground under bushes but away from where the male perches to sing. Begins breeding in April. Lays eggs in May. After the breeding season, moves to higher elevations. Song and plumage vary geographically and aren't well studied or understood.



male



female
p. 161



YEAR-ROUND

Red-winged Blackbird

Agelaius phoeniceus

Size: 8½" (22 cm)

Male: Jet black with red-and-yellow patches (epaulets) on upper wings. Pointed black bill.

Female: heavily streaked brown with a pointed brown bill and white eyebrows

Juvenile: same as female

Nest: cup; female builds; 2–3 broods per year

Eggs: 3–4; bluish green with brown markings

Incubation: 10–12 days; female incubates

Fledging: 11–14 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator; will move around the state to find food in winter

Food: seeds, insects; visits seed and suet feeders

Compare: The male Brown-headed Cowbird (p. 25) is smaller and glossier and has a brown head. Male Bronzed Cowbird (p. 29) is only slightly smaller, but more iridescent. The bold red-and-yellow epaulets distinguish the male Red-winged from other blackbirds.

Stan's Notes: One of the most widespread and numerous birds in Arizona. Found around marshes, wetlands, lakes and rivers. Flocks with as many as 10,000 birds have been reported. Males arrive before the females and sing to defend their territory. The male repeats his call from the top of a cattail while showing off his red-and-yellow shoulder patches. The female chooses a mate and often builds her nest over shallow water in a thick stand of cattails. The male can be aggressive when defending the nest. Red-winged Blackbirds feed mostly on seeds in spring and fall, and insects throughout the summer.

female
p. 163



male





YEAR-ROUND
WINTER

Brewer's Blackbird

Euphagus cyanocephalus

Size: 9" (22.5 cm)

Male: Overall glossy black, shining green in direct light. Head more purple than green. Bright-white or pale-yellow eyes. Winter plumage can be dull gray to black.

Female: similar to male, only overall grayish brown, most have dark eyes

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 1-2 broods per year

Eggs: 4-6; gray with brown markings

Incubation: 12-14 days; female incubates

Fledging: 13-14 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator in Arizona

Food: insects, seeds, fruit

Compare: Male Great-tailed Grackle (p. 45) is larger and has a very long tail. The male Brown-headed Cowbird (p. 25) is smaller and has a brown head. The male Bronzed Cowbird (p. 29) has red eyes. Male Red-winged Blackbird (p. 35) has red-and-yellow shoulder marks.

Stan's Notes: Common blackbird often found in association with agricultural lands and seen in open areas such as wet pastures, mountain meadows. Male and some females are easily identified by their bright, nearly white eyes. It is a common cowbird host, usually nesting in a shrub, small tree or directly on the ground. Prefers to nest in small colonies of up to 20 pairs. Gathers in large flocks with cowbirds, Red-wingeds and other blackbirds to migrate. It is expanding its range in North America.





SUMMER
MIGRATION
WINTER

Yellow-headed Blackbird

Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus

Size: 9–11" (23–28 cm)

Male: Large black bird with a lemon-yellow head, breast and nape of neck. Black mask and gray bill. White wing patches.

Female: similar to male but slightly smaller with a brown body and dull-yellow head and chest

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 2 broods per year

Eggs: 3–5; greenish white with brown markings

Incubation: 11–13 days; female incubates

Fledging: 9–12 days; female feeds the young

Migration: complete, to southern Arizona and Mexico

Food: insects, seeds; will come to ground feeders

Compare: The male Red-winged Blackbird (p. 35) is smaller and has red-and-yellow patches on its wings. Look for the bright-yellow head to identify the male Yellow-headed.

Stan's Notes: Found around marshes, wetlands and lakes. Nests in deep water, unlike its cousin, the Red-winged Blackbird, which prefers shallow water. Usually heard before seen. Gives a raspy, low, metallic-sounding call. The male is the only large black bird with a bright-yellow head. He gives an impressive mating display, flying with his head drooped and feet and tail pointing down while steadily beating his wings. Young keep low and out of sight for up to three weeks before they start to fly. Migrates in large flocks of as many as 200 birds, often with Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds. Flocks of mainly males return in early April; females return later. Most colonies consist of 20–100 nests.





YEAR-ROUND

Common Gallinule

Gallinula galeata

Size: 13–15" (33–38 cm)

Male: Nearly black overall with yellow-tipped red bill. Red forehead. Thin line of white along sides. Yellowish-green legs.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: same as adult, but brown with white throat and dirty-yellow legs

Nest: ground; female and male build; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 2–10; brown with dark markings

Incubation: 19–22 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 40–50 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator in Arizona

Food: insects, snails, seeds, green leaves, fruit

Compare: American Coot (p. 43) is similar in size but lacks the distinctive yellow-tipped bill and red forehead of Common Gallinule.

Stan's Notes: Also known as Mud Hen or Pond Chicken. A nearly all-black duck-like bird often seen in freshwater marshes and lakes. Walks on floating vegetation or swims while hunting for insects. Females known to lay eggs in other gallinule nests in addition to their own. Builds its nest with cattails and bulrushes and sometimes takes an old nest in a low shrub. A cooperative breeder, having young of first brood help raise young of second. Young leave nest usually within a few hours after hatching but stay with the family for a couple months. Young ride on backs of adults.





YEAR-ROUND

American Coot

Fulica americana

Size: 13–16" (33–40 cm)

Male: Gray-to-black waterbird. Duck-like white bill with a dark band near the tip and a small red patch near the eyes. Small white patch near base of tail. Green legs and feet. Red eyes.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: much paler than adults, with a gray bill

Nest: floating platform; female and male construct; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 9–12; pinkish buff with brown markings

Incubation: 21–25 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 49–52 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator in Arizona; moves around to find food

Food: insects, aquatic plants

Compare: Smaller than most waterfowl, it is the only black, duck-like bird with a white bill.

Stan's Notes: Usually seen in large flocks on open water. Not a duck, as it has large lobed toes instead of webbed feet. An excellent diver and swimmer, bobbing its head as it swims. A favorite food of Bald Eagles. It is not often seen in flight, unless it's trying to escape from an eagle. To take off, it scrambles across the surface of the water, flapping its wings. Gives a unique series of creaks, groans and clicks. Anchors its floating platform nest to vegetation. Huge flocks with as many as 1,000 birds gather for migration. Migrates at night. The common name "Coot" comes from the Middle English word *coote*, which was used to describe various waterfowl. Also called Mud Hen.



male



female
p. 187



YEAR-ROUND

Great-tailed Grackle

Quiscalus mexicanus

Size: 18" (45 cm), male
15" (38 cm), female

Male: Large all-black bird with iridescent purple sheen on the head and back. Exceptionally long tail. Bright-yellow eyes.

Female: considerably smaller than the male, overall brown bird with gray-to-brown belly, light-brown-to-white eyes, eyebrows, throat and upper chest

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 1-2 broods per year

Eggs: 3-5; greenish blue with brown markings

Incubation: 12-14 days; female incubates

Fledging: 21-23 days; female feeds young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator in Arizona; moves around to find food

Food: insects, fruit, seeds; comes to seed feeders

Compare: Male Brown-headed Cowbird (p. 25) lacks the long tail and has a brown head.

Stan's Notes: This is our largest grackle. It was once considered a subspecies of the Boat-tailed Grackle, which occurs in Florida and along the East and Gulf Coasts. A bird that prefers to nest near water in an open habitat. A colony nester. Males do not participate in nest building, incubation or raising young. Males rarely fight; females squabble over nest sites and materials. Several females mate with one male. They are expanding northward, moving into northern states. Western populations tend to be larger than the eastern. Song varies from population to population.

in flight





YEAR-ROUND
WINTER

American Crow

Corvus brachyrhynchos

Size: 18" (45 cm)

Male: All-black bird with black bill, legs and feet. Can have a purple sheen in direct sunlight.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: same as adult

Nest: platform; female builds; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–6; bluish to olive-green with brown marks

Incubation: 18 days; female incubates

Fledging: 28–35 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator; moves around to find food

Food: fruit, insects, mammals, fish, carrion; will come to seed and suet feeders

Compare: Chihuahuan Raven (p. 49) and Common Raven (p. 51) are similar, but they have a larger bill and have shaggy throat feathers. Crow's call is higher than the raspy, low calls of ravens. Crow has a squared tail. Ravens have a wedge-shaped tail, apparent in flight.

Stan's Notes: One of the most recognizable birds in Arizona. More common than its cousins, the ravens. Imitates other birds and human voices. One of the smartest of all birds and very social, often entertaining itself by provoking chases with other birds. Eats roadkill but is rarely hit by vehicles. Can live as long as 20 years. Often reuses its nest every year if it's not taken over by a Great Horned Owl. Unmated birds, known as helpers, help to raise the young. Extended families roost together at night, dispersing daily to hunt. Cannot soar on thermals; flaps constantly and glides downward.

in flight





YEAR-ROUND

Chihuahuan Raven

Corvus cryptoleucus

Size: 20" (50 cm)

Male: Large all-black bird with a large black bill. Long bristle-like feathers cover more than half the length of the bill. Slightly shaggy throat feathers. Black legs and feet.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adult, but color of feathers on the neck is sometimes lighter

Nest: cup; female builds; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 5–7; gray to green with brown markings

Incubation: 19–21 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 28–30 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator

Food: seeds, leaves, insects, fruit, small mammals

Compare: Common Raven (p. 51) is very similar, but it is larger and has a larger and longer bill. The American Crow (p. 47) lacks the shaggy throat and has a smaller bill.

Stan's Notes: Often confused with crows and other ravens. Usually found in open, flat regions. Known to cache food. Male performs an impressive aerial display, soaring and tumbling, then standing in front of female with neck feathers fluffed. Builds a loose cup nest of sticks and lines it with hair and dry grass. Nest is usually solitary in a tree. Will reuse its nest several years in a row. Often breeds late in the season, presumably to time hatching with the flush of insects after the rainy season. Forms large flocks of up to several hundred after young leave the nest and throughout the winter.

in flight





YEAR-ROUND

Common Raven

Corvus corax

Size: 22–27" (56–69 cm)

Male: Large all-black bird with a shaggy beard of feathers on throat and chin. Large black bill. Large wedge-shaped tail, best seen in flight.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: same as adult

Nest: platform; female and male construct; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–6; pale green with brown markings

Incubation: 18–21 days; female incubates

Fledging: 38–44 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator; will move around to find food

Food: insects, fruit, small animals, carrion

Compare: Chihuahuan Raven (p. 49) is similar but smaller. American Crow (p. 47) is smaller and lacks the shaggy throat feathers. Low raspy call, compared with the higher-pitched call of the Chihuahuan Raven and American Crow. Glides on flat, outstretched wings, unlike Crow's slightly V-shaped wings.

Stan's Notes: Considered by some people to be the smartest of all birds. Known for its aerial acrobatics and long swooping dives. Soars on wind without flapping, like a raptor. Sometimes scavenges with crows and gulls. A cooperative hunter that often communicates the location of a good source of food to other ravens. Most start to breed at 3–4 years. Complex courtship includes grabbing bills, preening each other and cooing. Long-term pair bond. Uses the same nest site for many years. Very difficult to tell Chihuahuan Ravens and Common Ravens apart.



soaring



juvenile



drying





YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER

Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aura

Size: 26–32" (66–80 cm); up to 6' wingspan

Male: Large and black with a naked red head and legs. In flight, wings are two-toned with a black leading edge and a gray trailing edge. Wing tips end in finger-like projections. Tail is long and squared. Ivory bill.

Female: same as male but slightly smaller

Juvenile: similar to adults, with a gray-to-blackish head and bill

Nest: no nest or minimal nest, on a cliff or in a cave, sometimes in a hollow tree; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 1–3; white with brown markings

Incubation: 38–41 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 66–88 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to southern Arizona, Mexico and Central and South America

Food: carrion; parents regurgitate to feed the young

Compare: Bald Eagle (p. 81) is larger and lacks two-toned wings. Look for the obvious naked red head to identify the Turkey Vulture.

Stan's Notes: The naked head reduces the risk of feather fouling (picking up diseases) from contact with carcasses. It has a strong bill for tearing apart flesh. Unlike hawks and eagles, it has weak feet more suited for walking than grasping. One of the few birds with a developed sense of smell. Mostly mute, making only grunts and groans. Holds its wings in an upright V shape in flight. Teeters from wing tip to wing tip as it soars and hovers. Seen in trees with wings outstretched, sunning itself and drying after a rain.





SUMMER

Painted Redstart

Myioborus pictus

Size: 6" (15 cm)

Male: Nearly all-black bird with a white patch on the wings and white outer tail feathers. A crescent-shaped white mark below the eyes. Bright-red breast and belly. Narrow, pointed black bill. Black legs and feet. Slight crest.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adult but lacks a red belly

Nest: cup; female builds; 1-2 broods per year

Eggs: 3-4; creamy white with brown markings

Incubation: 13-14 days; female incubates

Fledging: 11-13 days; female and male feed young

Migration: complete, to Mexico

Food: insects

Compare: Black Phoebe (p. 59) is larger and has a white belly. Look for the red belly and breast of Painted Redstart to help identify.

Stan's Notes: A very active bird of woodlands with water nearby. Constantly flits from branch to branch in search of insects. Leans forward, spreads tail and flares wings, flashing its black and white colors. This behavior presumably helps individuals visually locate each other while feeding. Males arrive at breeding sites about one week before the females. Male performs an erratic courtship flight, then chases female. Female builds a cup nest under an overhanging riverbank or cliff. Female broods the young, but both parents feed them. Young of the first clutch disperse quickly while adults start a second clutch. A summer resident, but some stay in Arizona during winter.





YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER

White-throated Swift

Aeronautes saxatalis

Size: 6½" (16 cm)

Male: Black with a white chin, chest and sides of rump. White trailing edge on the length of the first half of wings. Long narrow wings and long thin tail, as seen in flight.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adult

Nest: cup, in a cavity or crevice; female builds; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–5; white without markings

Incubation: 20–27; female and male incubate

Fledging: unknown number of days before fledging; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to southern Arizona, Mexico and Central America

Food: insects

Compare: Violet-green Swallow (p. 321), which is similar but not related, is entirely white beneath, compared with the narrow white band on the belly of White-throated Swift.

Stan's Notes: A common bird of rocky canyons in elevations from 5,500 to 8,200 feet (1,700 to 2,500 m). Almost always flying, it feeds, bathes and even mates while flying. Pairs press together and spin down through air, then break apart. Flies in groups, giving twittering calls. Returns in April. Doesn't nest until summer, when more insects are available to feed to young. Carries food to the young in an expandable throat pouch. Nests in small colonies, constructing cup-shaped nests in rock crevices. Like other swifts, uses its saliva to glue feathers and vegetation into a cup that it seals to the rock.





YEAR-ROUND

Black Phoebe

Sayornis nigricans

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Black head, neck, breast and back with a white belly and undertail. Long narrow tail. Dark eyes, bill and legs. Can raise and lower its small crest.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adult, brown-to-tan wing bars

Nest: cup; female builds; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 3–6; white without markings

Incubation: 15–17 days; female incubates

Fledging: 14–21 days; female and male feed young

Migration: partial migrator to non-migrator; will move around after breeding to find food

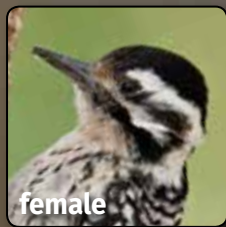
Food: insects

Compare: Distinctive black-and-white pattern makes identification easy. Watch for tail to pump up and down very quickly when perched. The male Vermilion Flycatcher (p. 339) is crimson and black. Say's Phoebe (p. 261) has a pale-orange belly and gray head.

Stan's Notes: Often seen in shrubby areas near water. Feeds mostly on insects near the surface of water. In the winter it feeds on insects near the ground. Like other flycatchers, perches on thin branches, flies out to snatch a passing insect and returns to perch. Pumps or bobs tail up and down quickly while perching. Male performs an aerial song and flight with a slow descent to attract a mate. Female builds shallow nest of mud, adhered to rocks or bridges, lined with hair and grass. Often uses same nest or location for several years.



male



female



YEAR-ROUND

Ladder-backed Woodpecker

Dryobates scalaris

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Horizontal black-and-white zebra stripes on back, wings and tail. Tan breast and belly with black spots. Red crown. Black eye stripe and mustache mark. Dark bill.

Female: same as male, but lacks a red crown

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cavity; female and male excavate, then use wood chips to line hole; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 2-4; white without markings

Incubation: 13-15 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 14-16 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator

Food: insects, fruit

Compare: Gila Woodpecker (p. 67) is larger and has a brown head. Hairy Woodpecker (p. 65) lacks zebra striping on the back.

Stan's Notes: Less common than other woodpeckers of arid desert scrub. Often probes for insects and larvae or feeds on cactus fruit. Male often feeds closer to ground than female; jumping to the ground to grab an insect or pecking at the base of shrubs and trees. Female feeds higher up and probes less, pulling bugs from leaves or cracks in bark. A sharp "peek" call and short spurt of drumming. Will drum on a log or tree to advertise territory ownership. Nests in dead branches of mesquite or saguaro cactus. Sometimes will excavate a cavity in a wooden post, yucca plant or utility pole. Common name comes from the ladder-like black-and-white stripes.



male



female



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER
WINTER

Red-naped Sapsucker

Sphyrapicus nuchalis

Size: 8½" (22 cm)

Male: Black-and-white pattern on the back in two rows. Red forehead, chin and nape of neck.

Female: same as male, but has a white chin and more white on the back

Juvenile: brown version of adults, lacking any of the red markings

Nest: cavity; female and male excavate; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–7; pale white without markings

Incubation: 12–13 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 25–29 days; female and male feed young

Migration: complete, to southern Arizona, Mexico, Central America; non-migrator in a small part of Arizona

Food: insects, tree sap; will visit feeders

Compare: The Lewis's Woodpecker (p. 325) lacks the black-and-white pattern of the Red-naped.

Stan's Notes: Closely related to the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker of the eastern U.S. Often associated with aspen, cottonwood and willow trees, nearly always nesting in aspen trees where they are present. Creates several horizontal rows of holes in a tree from which sap oozes. A wide variety of birds and animals use the sap wells that sapsuckers drill. Sapsuckers can't suck sap as their name implies; instead they lap up the sap and eat the insects attracted to it. Some females lack the white chin that helps to differentiate the sexes.



A male Downy Woodpecker is perched on a light-colored, textured tree trunk. The bird has a black cap with a prominent red patch on the forehead. Its back and wings are black with white spots, and its underparts are white with black spots. The background is a soft-focus green with yellow flowers and red berries in the upper left corner.

male



A close-up of a female Downy Woodpecker's head. The bird has a black cap with a white stripe through the eye. The background is a solid red color.

female



YEAR-ROUND

Hairy Woodpecker

Leuconotopicus villosus

Size: 9" (23 cm)

Male: Black-and-white woodpecker with a white belly. Black wings with rows of white spots. White stripe down the back. Long black bill. Red mark on the back of the head.

Female: same as male but lacks the red mark

Juvenile: grayer version of the female

Nest: cavity with an oval entrance hole; female and male excavate; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–6; white without markings

Incubation: 11–15 days; female incubates during the day, male incubates at night

Fledging: 28–30 days; male and female feed the young

Migration: non-migrator; moves around in winter to find food

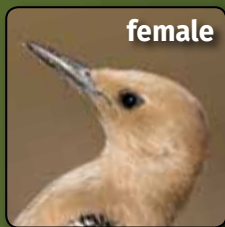
Food: insects, nuts, seeds; comes to seed and suet feeders

Compare: Ladder-backed Woodpecker (p. 61) has zebra-like stripes. The Gila Woodpecker (p. 67) has a brown head and fine horizontal barring on its back. Look for Hairy Woodpecker's long bill.

Stan's Notes: A common bird in wooded backyards. Announces its arrival with a sharp chirp before landing on feeders. Responsible for eating many destructive forest insects. Uses its barbed tongue to extract insects from trees. Tiny, bristle-like feathers at the base of the bill protect the nostrils from wood dust. Drums on hollow logs, branches or stovepipes in spring to announce territory. Prefers to excavate nest cavities in live aspen trees. Makes short flights from tree to tree.



male



female



YEAR-ROUND

Gila Woodpecker

Melanerpes uropygialis

Size: 9" (22.5 cm)

Male: Fine pattern of black-and-white horizontal barring on the back, wings and tail. A light brown head, chest and belly. Red cap. Long dark bill. Dark eyes. Black barring on white rump. White wrist mark, seen in flight.

Female: same as male, but lacks the red cap and has a yellow wash to belly

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cavity; female and male excavate in cactus; 1-3 broods (3 if food is abundant) per year

Eggs: 3-4; white without markings

Incubation: 12-14 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 10-13 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator

Food: insects, fruit, seeds

Compare: Northern Flicker (p. 181) has brown-and-black horizontal barring on the back. Acorn Woodpecker (p. 69) has an all-black back. Ladder-backed Woodpecker (p. 61) has black markings on head. Gila lacks the all-white rump of many woodpecker species.

Stan's Notes: Common in semi-desert with larger cacti. Excavates cavity in a large saguaro cactus, but due to sap oozing usually does not nest in it until the following year. Defends nest from European Starlings. Old nest cavities often used by small owls and other bird species. Gives a loud, harsh "quirrrrrrr" call to other Gilas. Also has a laughing-like "gee-gee-gee-gee" call. Stores large caches of acorns.



male



female



YEAR-ROUND

Acorn Woodpecker

Melanerpes formicivorus

Size: 9" (22.5 cm)

Male: A black-and-white woodpecker with an all-black back and prominent white eyes. Red cap and nape of neck. White forehead and cheeks. White rump and tips of wings, seen in flight.

Female: same as male, but has a smaller bill and less red on head

Juvenile: similar to adult of the same sex

Nest: cavity; male and female excavate; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3-7; white without markings

Incubation: 11-12 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 30-32 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator; moves around to find acorns

Food: nuts, fruit, insects, sap; comes to suet and seed feeders

Compare: Lewis's Woodpecker (p. 325) is larger and lacks the white on head and the red cap.

Stan's Notes: A woodpecker that depends upon acorns and other nuts for survival. Dead trees are very important to this species, as they are to all woodpeckers. Drills uniform holes in trees and telephone poles, where it wedges acorns and other nuts, storing them for later consumption. Unlike other woodpeckers, it lives and nests in small colonies. Colonies consist of up to 5 males, 1-2 females and up to 12 juveniles from previous years. All members help to raise the new young. This is a very vocal species, giving a loud, nasal "wheka-wheka-wheka" call.





YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER
MIGRATION

Black-necked Stilt

Himantopus mexicanus

Size: 14" (36 cm)

Male: Black-and-white with ridiculously long red-to-pink legs. Upper parts of the head, neck and back are black. Lower parts are white. Long black bill.

Female: similar to male but browner on back

Juvenile: similar to female but brown instead of black

Nest: ground; female and male construct; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–5; off-white with dark markings

Incubation: 22–26 days; male incubates during the day, female incubates at night

Fledging: 28–32 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to Mexico and Central and South America; non-migrator in parts of Arizona

Food: aquatic insects

Compare: Outrageous length of the red-to-pink legs makes this shorebird hard to confuse with any other.

Stan's Notes: A unique-looking bird that seems out of place in arid Arizona. Prefers shallow water ponds, often seen at wastewater treatment facilities. Nests alone or in small colonies in open areas. This very vocal bird of shallow marshes gives a “kek-kek-kek” call. Its legs are up to 10 inches (25 cm) long and may be the longest legs in the bird world in proportion to the body. Known to transport water with water-soaked belly feathers (belly-soaking) to cool eggs in hot weather. Aggressively defends its nest, eggs and young. Young leave the nest shortly after hatching.

female p.193



male





WINTER

Lesser Scaup

Aythya affinis

Size: 16–17" (40–43 cm)

Male: Appears mostly black with bold white sides and a gray back. Chest and head look nearly black, but head appears purple with green highlights in direct sun. Bright-yellow eyes.

Female: overall brown with a dull-white patch at the base of a light-gray bill; yellow eyes

Juvenile: same as female

Nest: ground; female builds; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 8–14; olive-buff without markings

Incubation: 22–28 days; female incubates

Fledging: 45–50 days; female teaches the young to feed

Migration: complete, to southwestern states, Mexico, Central America and northern South America

Food: aquatic plants and insects

Compare: The male Ring-necked Duck (p. 75) has a bold white ring around its bill, a black back and lacks the bold white sides of the male Lesser Scaup. The white sides and gray back help identify the male Lesser Scaup.

Stan's Notes: A common diving duck. Often seen in large flocks on lakes, ponds and sewage lagoons. Submerges completely to feed on the bottom (unlike dabbling ducks, which tip forward to reach the bottom). The male leaves the female when she starts incubating eggs. Egg quantity (clutch size) increases with the female's age. Has an interesting babysitting arrangement: groups of young (crèches) are tended by one to three adult females. A winter resident, it doesn't breed in Arizona.

female
p. 195



male





WINTER

Ring-necked Duck

Aythya collaris

Size: 16–19" (41–48 cm)

Male: Striking black duck with light-gray-to-white sides. Blue bill with a bold white ring and a thinner ring at the base. Peaked head with a sloped forehead.

Female: brown with darker-brown back and crown, light-brown sides, gray face, white eye-ring, white ring around the bill, and peaked head

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: ground; female builds; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 8–10; olive-gray to brown without markings

Incubation: 26–27 days; female incubates

Fledging: 49–56 days; female teaches the young to feed

Migration: complete migrator, to southwestern states, Mexico and Central America

Food: aquatic plants and insects

Compare: Similar size as male Lesser Scaup (p. 73), which has a gray back, unlike the black back of male Ring-necked Duck. Look for the blue bill with a bold white ring to identify the male Ring-necked Duck.

Stan's Notes: A common winter duck in Arizona. Usually in larger freshwater lakes, in small flocks or just pairs. Watch for this diving duck to dive underwater to forage for food. Springs up off the water to take flight. Flattens its crown when diving. Male gives a quick series of grating barks and grunts. Female gives high-pitched peeps. Named "Ring-necked" for its cinnamon collar, which is nearly impossible to see in the field. Also called Ring-billed Duck due to the white ring on its bill.

winter



breeding





MIGRATION

American Avocet

Recurvirostra americana

Size: 18" (45 cm)

Male: Black-and-white back, with a white belly. A long, thin upturned bill and long gray legs. Rusty-red head and neck during breeding season, gray in winter.

Female: similar to male, more strongly upturned bill

Juvenile: similar to adults, slight wash of rusty red on the neck and head

Nest: ground; female and male construct; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–5; light olive with brown markings

Incubation: 22–29 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 28–35 days; female and male feed young

Migration: complete, to Mexico

Food: insects, crustaceans, aquatic vegetation, fruit

Compare: One of the few long-legged shorebirds in Arizona. Look for the rusty-red head of breeding Avocet and the long upturned bill.

Stan's Notes: A handsome, long-legged bird that prefers shallow alkaline, saline or brackish water, it is well adapted to arid western U.S. conditions. Uses its upturned bill to sweep from side to side across mud bottoms in search of insects. Both the male and female have a brood patch to incubate eggs and brood their young. Nests in loose colonies of up to 20 pairs; all members defend against intruders together. Doesn't nest in Arizona.



in flight



juvenile



YEAR-ROUND
SUMMER
MIGRATION

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

Size: 22–27" (56–69 cm); up to 3½' wingspan

Male: A stocky, hunched and inactive heron with black back and crown, white belly and gray wings. Long dark bill and bright-red eyes. Short dull-yellow legs. Breeding adult has 2 long white plumes on crown.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: golden-brown head and back with white spots, streaked breast, yellow-orange eyes, brown bill

Nest: platform; female and male build; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–5; light blue without markings

Incubation: 24–26 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 42–48 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to southwestern states, Mexico and Central America; non-migrator in parts of Arizona

Food: fish, aquatic insects

Compare: A perching Great Blue Heron (p. 309) looks twice the size of a Black-crowned. Look for a short-necked heron with a black back and crown.

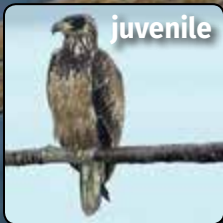
Stan's Notes: A very secretive bird, this heron is most active near dawn and dusk (crepuscular). It hunts alone, but it nests in small colonies. Roosts in trees during the day. Often squawks if disturbed from the daytime roost. Often seen being harassed by other herons during days.



soaring



juvenile



soaring
juvenile





YEAR-ROUND
WINTER

Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

Size: 31–37" (79–94 cm); up to 7½' wingspan

Male: White head and tail contrast sharply with the dark-brown-to-black body and wings. Large, curved yellow bill and yellow feet.

Female: same as male but larger

Juvenile: dark brown with white speckles and spots on the body and wings; gray bill

Nest: massive platform, usually in a tree; female and male build; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 2–3; off-white without markings

Incubation: 34–36 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 75–90 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: partial to complete; to southwestern states

Food: fish, carrion, birds (mainly ducks)

Compare: The Golden Eagle (p. 221) and Turkey Vulture (p. 53) lack the white head and white tail of adult Bald Eagle. The juvenile Golden Eagle (p. 221), with its white wrist marks and white base of tail, is similar to the juvenile Bald Eagle.

Stan's Notes: Nearly became extinct due to DDT poisoning and illegal killing. Returns to the same nest each year, adding more sticks and enlarging it to huge proportions, at times up to 1,000 pounds (450 kg). In their midair mating ritual, one eagle flips upside down and locks talons with another. Both tumble, then break apart to continue flight. Not uncommon for juveniles to perform this mating ritual even though they have not reached breeding age. Long-term pair bond but will switch mates when not successful at reproducing. Juveniles attain the white head and tail at 4–5 years of age. Winter resident except for a few scattered locations.

soaring



juvenile





YEAR-ROUND

California Condor

Gymnogyps californianus

Size: 44–46" (112–117 cm); up to 9½' wingspan

Male: Black with splayed “fingertips” on wings and white wing linings, as seen in flight. Ruffle of feathers around neck. Orange-to-red head. Small dark patch between eyes. Short tail.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adult, but gray head and lacks the white wing linings

Nest: no nest; lays egg on a coarse gravel bed on cave floor; 0–1 brood per year

Eggs: 1; pale green without markings

Incubation: 42–50 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 160–180 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator to partial; moves around in winter to find food

Food: carrion

Compare: Turkey Vulture (p. 53) is smaller with gray trailing edges of wings. The Golden Eagle (p. 221) is smaller and has a white base of tail. Most California Condors in the wild are marked with numbered, colored wing tags.

Stan's Notes: The largest flying bird in North America. Can soar to 15,000 feet (4,575 m). A vulture, mistaken for small aircraft. Slow wingbeats. Usually silent, will hiss if approached at nest. Matures at 6–7 years. Long-term pair bond. Most breed every other year. Presumed to live 40 years, perhaps up to 70. Has weaker feet than eagles and hawks. Nearly extinct in the 1980s. The remaining wild birds were caught and put into a captive breeding program. Young were released into the wild. Populations are slowly increasing.

male

female
p. 119





SUMMER

Indigo Bunting

Passerina cyanea

Size: 5½" (14 cm)

Male: Vibrant-blue finch-like bird. Dark markings scattered on wings and tail.

Female: light brown with faint markings

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 2 broods per year

Eggs: 3–4; pale blue without markings

Incubation: 12–13 days; female incubates

Fledging: 10–11 days; female feeds the young

Migration: complete, to Mexico, Central America and South America

Food: insects, seeds, fruit; will visit seed feeders

Compare: The male Western Bluebird (p. 95) is larger and has a rust-red chest. Male Mountain Bluebird (p. 93) has a thin black bill and white lower belly.

Stan's Notes: Seen along woodland edges and in parks and yards, feeding on insects. Comes to seed feeders early in spring, before insects are plentiful. Usually only the males are noticed. The male often sings from treetops to attract a mate. The female is quiet. Actually a gray bird, without blue pigment in its feathers: like Blue Jays and other blue birds, sunlight is refracted within the structure of the feathers, making them appear blue. Plumage is iridescent in direct sun, duller in shade. Molts in spring to acquire body feathers with gray tips, which quickly wear off, revealing the bright-blue plumage. Molts in fall and appears like the female during winter. Migrates at night in flocks of 5–10 birds. Males return before the females and juveniles, often to the nest site of the preceding year. Juveniles move to within a mile of their birth site.



male



female
p. 121



SUMMER
MIGRATION
WINTER

Lazuli Bunting

Passerina amoena

Size: 5½" (14 cm)

Male: A turquoise-blue head, neck, back and tail. Cinnamon chest with cinnamon extending down flanks slightly. White belly. Two bold white wing bars. Non-breeding male has a spotty blue head and back.

Female: overall grayish brown, warm-brown breast, a light wash of blue on wings and tail, gray throat, light-gray belly and 2 narrow white wing bars

Juvenile: similar to adult of the same sex

Nest: cup; female builds; 2–3 broods per year

Eggs: 3–5; pale blue without markings

Incubation: 11–13 days; female incubates

Fledging: 10–12 days; female and male feed young

Migration: complete, to Mexico; a few winter in far southeastern Arizona

Food: insects, seeds

Compare: The male Indigo Bunting (p. 85) lacks the male Lazuli's multicolored plumage. Male Western Bluebird (p. 95) is darker blue. Male Blue Grosbeak (p. 91) has chestnut wing bars and lacks a white belly.

Stan's Notes: More common in shrublands in Arizona. Does not like dense forests. Strong association with water, such as rivers and streams. Gathers in small flocks and tends to move up in elevations after breeding to hunt for insects and look for seeds. Males sing from short shrubs and scrubby areas to attract females. Rarely perches on tall trees. Each male has his own unique combination of notes to produce his "own" song.





SUMMER
MIGRATION

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Sleek swallow. Blue-black back, cinnamon belly and reddish-brown chin. White spots on a long, deeply forked tail.

Female: same as male but with a whitish belly

Juvenile: similar to adults, with a tan belly and chin, and shorter tail

Nest: cup; female and male build; 2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–5; white with brown markings

Incubation: 13–17 days; female incubates

Fledging: 18–23 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to South America

Food: insects (prefers beetles, wasps, flies)

Compare: Cliff Swallow (p. 123) and Violet-green Swallow (p. 321) are smaller and lack a distinctive, deeply forked tail. Violet-green Swallow is green with a white face. Look for Barn Swallow's deeply forked tail.

Stan's Notes: Seen in wetlands, farms, suburban yards and parks. Of the seven swallow species regularly found in Arizona, this is the only one with a deeply forked tail. Unlike other swallows, it rarely glides in flight. Usually flies low over land or water. Drinks as it flies, skimming water, or will sip water droplets on wet leaves. Bathes while flying through rain or sprinklers. Gives a twittering warble, followed by a mechanical sound. Builds a mud nest with up to 1,000 beak-loads of mud. Nests on barns and houses, under bridges and in other sheltered places. Often nests in colonies of 4–6 birds; sometimes nests alone.

female
p. 139



male





SUMMER
MIGRATION

Blue Grosbeak

Passerina caerulea

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Overall blue bird with 2 chestnut wing bars. Large gray-to-silver bill. Black around base of bill.

Female: overall brown with darker wings and tail, 2 tan wing bars, large gray-to-silver bill

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cup; female builds; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 3–6; pale blue without markings

Incubation: 11–12 days; female incubates

Fledging: 9–10 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete, to Mexico and Central America

Food: insects, seeds; will come to seed feeders

Compare: Male Lazuli Bunting (p. 87) has two bold white wing bars and a white belly. The male Indigo Bunting (p. 85) is smaller and lacks wing bars. The male Mountain and Western Bluebirds (pp. 93 and 95) are the same size, but they lack the chestnut wing bars and oversized bill.

Stan's Notes: This grosbeak returns to the state late, by early May. A bird of semi-open habitats, such as overgrown fields, riversides, woodland edges and fencerows. Visits seed feeders. The first-year males show only some blue, obtaining the full complement of blue feathers in the second winter. It has expanded northward, with overall populations increasing over the past 30–40 years.

male



female





YEAR-ROUND
WINTER

Mountain Bluebird

Sialia currucoides

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Overall sky-blue bird with a darker blue head, back, wings and tail. White lower belly. Thin black bill.

Female: similar to male, but paler with a nearly gray head and chest and a whitish belly

Juvenile: similar to adult of the same sex

Nest: cavity, old woodpecker cavity, wooden nest box; female builds; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–6; pale blue without markings

Incubation: 13–14 days; female incubates

Fledging: 22–23 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator, to southern Arizona and Mexico

Food: insects, fruit

Compare: Western Bluebird (p. 95) is similar, but it is a darker blue and has a rusty red chest. Male Indigo Bunting (p. 85) is smaller and lacks a white lower belly. Male Blue Grosbeak (p. 91) has chestnut wing bars and an oversized bill.

Stan's Notes: Common in open mountainous country, nesting in half of Arizona. Main diet is insects. Due to conservation of suitable nesting sites (dead trees with cavities and man-made nest boxes), populations have increased over the past 40 years. Like other bluebirds, Mountain Bluebirds take well to nest boxes and tolerate close contact with people. Female sits on baby birds (brood) for up to six days after the eggs hatch. Young imprint on their first nest box or cavity and then choose a similar type of box or cavity throughout their life.

male



female





YEAR-ROUND
WINTER

Western Bluebird

Sialia mexicana

Size: 7" (18 cm)

Male: Deep blue head, neck, throat, back, wings and tail. Rusty-red chest and flanks.

Female: similar to male, only duller with a gray head

Juvenile: similar to female, with a speckled chest

Nest: cavity, old woodpecker cavity, wooden nest box; female builds; 1-2 broods per year

Eggs: 4-6; pale blue without markings

Incubation: 13-14 days; female incubates

Fledging: 22-23 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator to partial migrator, to southwestern states and Mexico

Food: insects, fruit

Compare: The Mountain Bluebird (p. 93) is similar but lacks the rusty-red breast. Male Lazuli Bunting (p. 87) is smaller and has white wing bars. Male Blue Grosbeak (p. 91) is the same size but has chestnut wing bars and an oversized bill.

Stan's Notes: Not as common as the Mountain Bluebird. Found in a variety of habitats, from agricultural land to clear-cuts. Requires a cavity for nesting. Competes with starlings for nest cavities. Like the Mountain Bluebird, it uses nest boxes, which are responsible for the stable populations. A courting male will fly in front of the female, spread his wings and tail, and perch next to her. Often goes in and out of its nest box or cavity as if to say, "Look inside." Male may offer food to the female to establish a pair bond.





YEAR-ROUND

Pinyon Jay

Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus

Size: 11" (28 cm)

Male: A short-tailed dull-blue jay. Head is darker blue than rest of body. Faint white streaks on chin. Long, pointed black bill. Black legs.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: overall gray with blue highlights

Nest: cup; female and male construct; 1–2 broods per year

Eggs: 4–5; blue, green, gray or white with brown markings

Incubation: 16–17 days; female incubates

Fledging: 19–21 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator; moves around to find food

Food: seeds, insects, fruit

Compare: The Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (p. 101) has a white chest and belly. Steller's Jay (p. 99) has a black head and crest. Mexican Jay (p. 103) has a gray chest and belly.

Stan's Notes: Highly specialized jay, usually seen near pinyon pine trees. Gathers nuts from pinyon cones, storing them in large caches often on the ground. An important seed disperser, with forgotten caches sprouting into new trees. Can breed in late winter in years with abundant seed production. Gregarious, it breeds in colonies of up to 50 pairs. Starts breeding at age 3. Mates are often the same age and stay together for years. In winter, flocks of up to several hundred gather to roost and find food and move on when supplies are low. Has a soft flight song of, "hoyi-hoyi-hoyi-hoyi." Often walks rather than hops, like most other jays. Closely related to Clark's Nutcracker.





YEAR-ROUND

Steller's Jay

Cyanocitta stelleri

Size: 11" (28 cm)

Male: Dark-blue wings, tail and belly. Black head, nape of the neck and chest. Large, pointed black crest on head that can be lifted at will. Distinctive white streaks on forehead and just above eyes.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adult

Nest: cup; female and male construct; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–5; pale green with brown markings

Incubation: 14–16 days; female incubates

Fledging: 16–18 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: non-migrator; moves around to find food

Food: insects, berries, seeds; will visit seed feeders

Compare: The Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (p. 101) and Mexican Jay (p. 103) are the same size, but they lack the black head and crest of the Steller's Jay.

Stan's Notes: Common resident of foothills and lower mountains from 6,000 to 8,000 feet (1,850 to 2,450 m). Usually only found in conifer forests. Thought to mate for life, rarely dispersing far, usually breeding within 10 miles (16 km) of the place of birth. Several subspecies found throughout the Rockies. The Arizona form has a black crest with distinct white streaks, while others lack white markings. Named after the Arctic explorer Georg W. Steller, who is said to have first recorded the bird on the coast of Alaska in 1741.





YEAR-ROUND

Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay

Aphelocoma woodhouseii

Size: 11" (28 cm)

Male: Blue head, wings, tail and breast band. Brownish patch on back. Dull white chin, breast and belly. Very long tail.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adult, overall gray with light-blue wings and tail

Nest: cup; female and male construct; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 3–6; pale green with red-brown markings

Incubation: 15–17 days; female incubates

Fledging: 18–20 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator; moves around to find food in winter

Food: insects, seeds, fruit; comes to seed feeders

Compare: The closely related Mexican Jay (p. 103) is slightly larger, lighter blue and lacks a brownish patch on the back. Steller's Jay (p. 99) is similar in size but lacks the black head and the crest. Pinyon Jay (p. 97) has a light-blue chest and belly.

Stan's Notes: A tame bird of urban areas that visits feeders. Forms a long-term pair bond, with the male feeding female before and during incubation. Young of a pair remain close by for up to a couple years, helping parents raise subsequent brothers and sisters. Caches food by burying it for later consumption. Likely serves as a major distributor of oaks and pines by not returning to eat the seeds it buried.





YEAR-ROUND

Mexican Jay

Aphelocoma wollweberi

Size: 11½" (29 cm)

Male: Mostly blue with plain gray chest and belly. Gray can extend to upper back. Large black bill. Black legs.

Female: same as male

Juvenile: similar to adult, gray head, neck and back, black-tipped yellow bill until 2 years old

Nest: cup; female and male build; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 4–5; pale green without markings

Incubation: 16–18 days; female incubates

Fledging: 24–26 days; female and male feed young

Migration: non-migrator

Food: fruit, insects, seeds, reptiles

Compare: Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (p. 101) is darker blue and has a brownish patch on the back and a white chin. Steller's Jay (p. 99) is slightly smaller and has a black head and crest. Pinyon Jay (p. 97) has a light-blue chest and belly.

Stan's Notes: In the U.S. this jay occurs only in Arizona and parts of New Mexico and Texas. The Arizona variety is larger and lighter blue than the Texas version. Often travels around in large groups of mostly family members in search of acorns, one of its favorite foods. During courtship, male displays to female, circling her with tail and wings tilted toward her. Usually only a couple dominant females of an extended family group breed each year. The remainder of the flock help raise the young. Closely related to scrub-jays. Formerly called Gray-breasted Jay.



male



female



WINTER

Belted Kingfisher

Megasceryle alcyon

Size: 12–14" (30–36 cm)

Male: Blue with white belly, blue-gray chest band, and black wing tips. Ragged crest moves up and down at will. Large head. Long, thick, black bill. White spot by eyes. Red-brown eyes.

Female: same as male but with rusty flanks and a rusty chest band below the blue-gray band

Juvenile: similar to female

Nest: cavity; female and male excavate in a bank of a river, lake or cliff; 1 brood per year

Eggs: 6–7; white without markings

Incubation: 23–24 days; female and male incubate

Fledging: 23–24 days; female and male feed the young

Migration: complete migrator, to southwestern states, Mexico and Central and South America

Food: small fish

Compare: Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (p. 101) is smaller. The Belted Kingfisher is rarely found away from water.

Stan's Notes: Usually found at the bank of a river, lake or large stream. Perches on a branch near water, dives in headfirst to catch a small fish, then returns to the branch to feed. Parents drop dead fish into the water to teach their young to dive. Can't pass bones through its digestive tract; regurgitates bone pellets after meals. Loud call that sounds like a machine gun. Mates know each other by their calls. Digs a tunnel up to 4 feet (about 1 m) long to a nest chamber. Small white patches on dark wing tips flash during flight.



BIRDING ON THE INTERNET

Birding online is a great way to discover additional information and learn more about birds. These websites will assist you in your pursuit of birds. Web addresses sometimes change a bit, so if one no longer works, just enter the name of the group into a search engine to track down the new address.

Site	Address
Author Stan Tekiela's homepage	naturesmart.com
American Birding Association	aba.org
Arizona Raptor Center	arizonaraptorcenter.org
Arizona's Raptor Experience	arizonasraptorexperience.com
Audubon Arizona	az.audubon.org
The Cornell Lab of Ornithology	birds.cornell.edu
eBird	ebird.org
International Raptor & Falconry Center	raptorfalconrycenter.org
Maricopa Audubon Society	www.maricopaaudubon.org
Northern Arizona Audubon Society	www.northernarizonaaudubon.org
Rio Salado Audubon Center	riosalado.audubon.org
Tucson Audubon Society	tucsonaudubon.org

CHECKLIST/INDEX BY SPECIES

Use the boxes to check the birds you've seen.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avocet, American 77 | <input type="checkbox"/> Egret, Snowy. 347 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blackbird, Brewer's 37, 163 | <input type="checkbox"/> Falcon, Peregrine 301 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blackbird, Red-winged 35, 161 | <input type="checkbox"/> Finch, House 111, 337 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blackbird, Yellow-headed 39, 175 | <input type="checkbox"/> Flicker, Gilded 179 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bluebird, Mountain. 93 | <input type="checkbox"/> Flicker, Northern 181 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bluebird, Western. 95 | <input type="checkbox"/> Flycatcher, Vermilion 257, 339 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bunting, Indigo 85, 119 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gadwall 197, 305 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bunting, Lazuli 87, 121 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gallinule, Common 41 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bushtit 235 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gnatcatcher, Black-tailed 225 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cardinal, Northern 157, 343 | <input type="checkbox"/> Goldfinch, American 357 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chickadee, Mountain. 243 | <input type="checkbox"/> Goldfinch, Lesser 355 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collared-Dove, Eurasian 293 | <input type="checkbox"/> Goose, Canada 307 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Condor, California. 83 | <input type="checkbox"/> Goose, Snow. 349 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coot, American 43 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grackle, Great-tailed 45, 187 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cowbird, Bronzed 29, 147 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grebe, Pied-billed 185 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cowbird, Brown-headed 25, 145 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grosbeak, Black-headed 155, 335 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crane, Sandhill 311 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grosbeak, Blue 91, 139 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crow, American 47 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grosbeak, Evening 371 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dipper, American 263 | <input type="checkbox"/> Harrier, Northern 207, 303 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dove, Inca 265 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hawk, Cooper's 299 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dove, Eurasian Collared-. 293 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hawk, Ferruginous 215 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dove, Mourning. 183 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hawk, Harris's. 213 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dove, White-winged 289 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hawk, Red-tailed 211 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Duck, Ring-necked 75, 195 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hawk, Sharp-shinned 297 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eagle, Bald. 81 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hawk, Swainson's. 209 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eagle, Golden 221 | <input type="checkbox"/> Heron, Black-crowned Night- 79 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Egret, Great 351 | <input type="checkbox"/> Heron, Great Blue. 309 |

□ Heron, Green	327	□ Owl, Burrowing	171
□ Hummingbird, Anna's	319	□ Owl, Great Horned	217
□ Hummingbird, Black-chinned	315	□ Owl, Western Screech-	273
□ Hummingbird, Broad-tailed	317	□ Pewee, Western Wood-	259
□ Hummingbird, Costa's	313	□ Phainopepla	31, 267
□ Jay, Mexican	103	□ Phoebe, Black	59
□ Jay, Pinyon	97	□ Phoebe, Say's	261
□ Jay, Steller's	99	□ Pigeon, Rock	295
□ Jay, Woodhouse's Scrub-	101	□ Pintail, Northern	205
□ Junco, Dark-eyed	117, 245	□ Poorwill, Common	151
□ Junco, Yellow-eyed	247	□ Pyrrhuloxia	277
□ Kestrel, American	173	□ Quail, Gambel's	283
□ Killdeer	177	□ Quail, Scaled	285
□ Kingbird, Western	375	□ Raven, Chihuahuan	49
□ Kingfisher, Belted	105	□ Raven, Common	51
□ Kinglet, Golden-crowned	229	□ Redhead	199, 345
□ Kinglet, Ruby-crowned	227	□ Redstart, Painted	55
□ Lark, Horned	141	□ Roadrunner, Greater	219
□ Mallard	203, 329	□ Robin, American	279
□ Meadowlark, Western	377	□ Sandpiper, Spotted	153
□ Mockingbird, Northern	281	□ Sapsucker, Red-naped	63
□ Night-Heron, Black-crowned	79	□ Scaup, Lesser	73, 193
□ Nighthawk, Lesser	165	□ Screech-Owl, Western	273
□ Nutcracker, Clark's	291	□ Scrub-Jay, Woodhouse's	101
□ Nuthatch, Pygmy	233	□ Shoveler, Northern	201, 331
□ Nuthatch, Red-breasted	237	□ Shrike, Loggerhead	275
□ Nuthatch, White-breasted	249	□ Siskin, Pine	109
□ Oriole, Bullock's	333, 369	□ Solitaire, Townsend's	271
□ Oriole, Scott's	373	□ Sparrow, Black-throated	255

<input type="checkbox"/> Sparrow, Chipping	107	<input type="checkbox"/> Warbler, Wilson's	353
<input type="checkbox"/> Sparrow, Fox.	137	<input type="checkbox"/> Warbler, Yellow	363
<input type="checkbox"/> Sparrow, House	131	<input type="checkbox"/> Warbler, Yellow-rumped	251
<input type="checkbox"/> Sparrow, Lark	133	<input type="checkbox"/> Waxwing, Bohemian	149
<input type="checkbox"/> Sparrow, Song.	115	<input type="checkbox"/> Waxwing, Cedar	149
<input type="checkbox"/> Sparrow, White-crowned.	135	<input type="checkbox"/> Wood-Pewee, Western	259
<input type="checkbox"/> Starling, European	27	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodpecker, Acorn.	69
<input type="checkbox"/> Stilt, Black-necked	71	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodpecker, Arizona.	143
<input type="checkbox"/> Swallow, Barn	89	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodpecker, Gila	67
<input type="checkbox"/> Swallow, Cliff	123	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodpecker, Hairy	65
<input type="checkbox"/> Swallow, Violet-green	321	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodpecker, Ladder-backed	61
<input type="checkbox"/> Swift, White-throated.	57	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodpecker, Lewis's	325
<input type="checkbox"/> Tanager, Summer	341, 367	<input type="checkbox"/> Wren, Bewick's	125
<input type="checkbox"/> Tanager, Western	365	<input type="checkbox"/> Wren, Cactus	159
<input type="checkbox"/> Teal, Cinnamon	191	<input type="checkbox"/> Wren, Canyon	127
<input type="checkbox"/> Teal, Green-winged	189	<input type="checkbox"/> Wren, House.	113
<input type="checkbox"/> Thrasher, Curve-billed	287	<input type="checkbox"/> Wren, Rock.	129
<input type="checkbox"/> Thrasher, Sage.	269	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellowthroat, Common	359
<input type="checkbox"/> Titmouse, Bridled.	241		
<input type="checkbox"/> Titmouse, Juniper.	253		
<input type="checkbox"/> Towhee, Abert's	169		
<input type="checkbox"/> Towhee, Canyon.	167		
<input type="checkbox"/> Towhee, Green-tailed.	323		
<input type="checkbox"/> Towhee, Spotted	33		
<input type="checkbox"/> Turkey, Wild	223		
<input type="checkbox"/> Verdin	239		
<input type="checkbox"/> Vulture, Turkey	53		
<input type="checkbox"/> Warbler, Lucy's	231		
<input type="checkbox"/> Warbler, Orange-crowned	361		

MORE FOR ARIZONA BY STAN TEKIELA

Identification Guides

Birds of Prey of the West
Field Guide
Cactus of Arizona Field Guide
Mammals of Arizona Field Guide
Trees of Arizona Field Guide
Wildflowers of Arizona
Field Guide

Children's Books:

Adventure Board Book Series

Floppers & Loppers
Paws & Claws
Peepers & Peekers
Snouts & Sniffers

Children's Books

C is for Cardinal
Can You Count the Critters?
Critter Litter
Critter Litter Southwest

Children's Books:

Wildlife Picture Books

Baby Bear Discovers the World
The Cutest Critter
Do Beavers Need Blankets?
Hidden Critters
Jump, Little Wood Ducks
Some Babies Are Wild
Super Animal Powers
What Eats That?
Whose Baby Butt?
Whose Butt?
Whose House Is That?
Whose Track Is That?

Adventure Quick Guides

Birds of the Southwest



Nature Books

Bird Trivia
Stan Tekiela's Birding for
Beginners: Southwest
Start Mushrooming
A Year in Nature with Stan Tekiela

Favorite Wildlife

Bald Eagles

Wildlife Appreciation Series

Amazing Hummingbirds
Backyard Birds
Bears
Bird Migration
Cranes, Herons & Egrets
Deer, Elk & Moose
Intriguing Owls
Wild Birds

Nature Appreciation Series

Bird Nests
Feathers
Wildflowers

Our Love of Wildlife Series

Our Love of Loons
Our Love of Owls

Nature's Wild Cards (playing cards)

Bears
Birds of the Southwest
Hummingbirds
Loons
Mammals of the Southwest
Owls
Raptors
Trees of the Southwest



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Naturalist, wildlife photographer and writer Stan Tekiela is the originator of the popular state-specific field guide series that includes the *Trees of Arizona Field Guide*. Stan has authored more than 190 educational books, including field guides, quick guides, nature books, children's books, and more, presenting many species of animals and plants.

With a Bachelor of Science degree in natural history from the University of Minnesota and as an active professional naturalist for more than 30 years, Stan studies and photographs wildlife throughout the United States and Canada. He has received national and regional awards for his books and photographs and is also a well-known columnist and radio personality. His syndicated column appears in more than 25 newspapers, and his wildlife programs are broadcast on a number of Midwest radio stations. You can follow Stan on Facebook and Twitter or contact him via his website, nauresmart.com.



Arizona's Best-Selling Bird Guide

Make bird watching more informative and enjoyable

- **153 species:** Only Arizona birds!
- **Simple color guide:** See a yellow bird? Go to the yellow section
- **Compare feature:** Decide between look-alikes
- **Stan's Notes:** Naturalist tidbits and facts
- **Professional photos:** Crisp, stunning full-page images

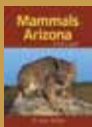
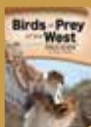
This 2nd Edition includes 8 new species, updated photographs and range maps, expanded information in Stan's Notes and much more!



About the Author

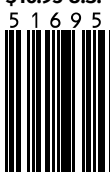
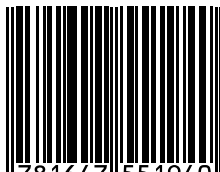
Naturalist Stan Tekiela is an award-winning wildlife photographer and the author of many popular state-specific field guides. He has written educational books about wildlife, including children's books, quick guides and more, presenting birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, trees, wildflowers and cacti.

GET THESE GREAT FIELD GUIDES FOR ARIZONA



ISBN 978-1-64755-194-0

\$16.95 U.S.



Adventure PUBLICATIONS
an imprint of AdventureKEEN

NATURE / BIRDS / ARIZONA

9 781647 551940