



BIRDS OF HERON'S HEAD PARK

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BIRDS OF HERON'S HEAD PARK

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IDENTIFYING BIRDS

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY WEBSITE

SIZE

EXACT SIZE IS USUALLY DIFFICULT TO GAUGE IN THE FIELD. TO GET AN IDEA OF HOW LARGE A BIRD IS, TRY COMPARING IT TO THE SIZE OF A BIRD YOU RECOGNIZE, SUCH AS A SPARROW, CROW, OR HERON.

SHAPE

LEARNING HOW TO EXAMINE BIRDS BY SHAPE HELPS MAKE IDENTIFYING EASY. TRY ASKING SOME SIMPLE QUESTIONS. IS THE NECK LONG OR SHORT? IS ITS TAIL SHORT, MEDIUM, OR LONG? IS THE BILL SHORT OR LONG? THICK OR THIN? WHEN THE BIRD FLIES, ARE ITS WINGS LONG AND POINTED OR SHORT AND ROUNDED?

BEHAVIOR

WHAT A BIRD DOES AND THE WAY IT MOVES CAN OFTEN TELL WHAT KIND OF SPECIES THE BIRD IS. TAKE NOTE OF THE WAY THE BIRD PERCHES, HOW IS IT FORAGING FOR FOOD, WHAT TYPE OF FOOD IS IT EATING, HOW IS IT FLYING, AND SO ON.

MARKINGS

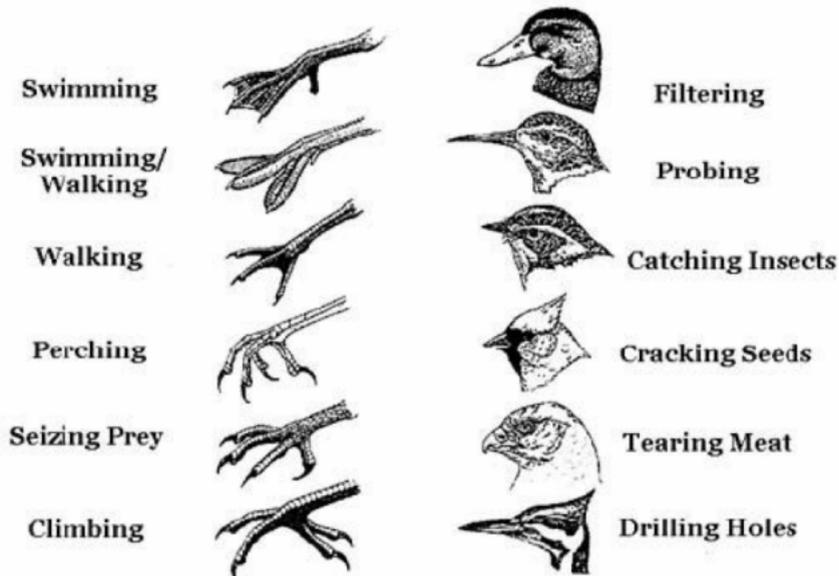
IMPORTANT MARKINGS CAN BE FOUND ON THE CROWN, FACE, THROAT, UNDER BELLY, WINGS, TAIL, AND UPPER BODY. TRY ASKING QUESTIONS SUCH AS, IS THE CROWN STRIPED, STREAKED, OR PLAIN? ARE THERE RINGS AROUND THE EYES, THROAT, OR BILL? IS THE UNDER BELLY STREAKED (LENGTHWISE), BARRED (CROSSWISE), SPOTTED, OR PLAIN?

CALLS

BIRDS MAKE TWO TYPES OF VOCALIZATIONS - SONGS AND CALLS. SONGS ARE USUALLY MORE COMPLEX AND ARE USED TO ESTABLISH AND DEFEND TERRITORY OR TO ATTRACT MATES. CALLS ARE USUALLY SIMPLE NOTES, SINGLE OR REPEATED AND ARE USED TO EXPRESS ALARM OR MAINTAIN CONTACT

IDENTIFYING BIRDS

Bird Beaks and Feet



UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON PHOTO - THE ADAPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF BILL AND FOOT STRUCTURE OPTIMIZE A BIRD'S ABILITY TO THRIVE IN ITS ENVIRONMENT

A close-up photograph of a duck's head, showing its dark, textured feathers and a large, dark, slightly hooked beak. The duck's eye is visible, showing a brown iris. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

BIRDS: PICTURED AND DESCRIBED

WATERFOWL

THE WATERFOWL FAMILY OR ANATIDAE, INCLUDES GEESE, SWANS, "DABBLING" DUCKS, AND "DIVING" DUCKS. ALL OF THESE BIRDS SHARE THE COMMONALITY OF LIVING IN AN AQUATIC HABITAT AND HAVE WEBBED FEET. HISTORICALLY, WATERFOWL HAVE OFTEN BEEN USED AS A FOOD RESOURCE FOR HUMANS AND THIS TREND HAS PUT THE BIRD GROUP'S POPULATION IN DECLINE.

VOICE:



CANADA GOOSE

BRANTA CANADENSIS

ORDER: ANSERIFORMES

FAMILY: ANATIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: STANDING 40-45 INCHES TALL, GEESE HAVE LONG BLACK NECKS, HEAD AND BILL: WHITE CHEEK PATCHES, LONG GRAYISH BODY: WHITE BLACK UNDER BLACK TAIL

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: LAKES, PONDS, GRASS FIELDS

HABITAT: WIDELY DISTRIBUTED ACROSS NORTH AMERICA. CANADA GEESE BREED AND NEST IN CANADA, ALASKA, AND ALL OF THE LOWER 48 STATES. THEY ARE FOUND AT A BROAD RANGE OF ELEVATIONS AND OCCUPY A BROAD RANGE OF HABITATS, AS LONG AS THERE IS WATER NEARBY.

BEHAVIOR: CANADA GEESE ARE OFTEN FOUND GRAZING IN PAIRS OR FLOCKS IN LARGE FIELDS AND LAWNS. THEY SOMETIMES FEED BY DABBLING IN SHALLOW WATERS AND ARE OFTEN SEEN IN FLYING IN PAIRS. WHEN FLYING IN A FLOCK, GEESE ASSUME A V FORMATION.

RANDOM FACTS: A MALE GOOSE IS CALLED "GANDER", A BABY IS CALLED A "GOSLING", A GROUP OF GEESE ARE CALLED A GAGGLE. THE FEMALE MOM IS RELATED TO AS MOTHER "GOOSE".





VOICE:



MALLARD

ANAS PLATYRHYNCHOS

ORDER: ANSERIFORMES
FAMILY: ANATIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 23-27" INCHES IN LENGTH, MALLARD DUCKS UN-CRESTED, GLOSSY GREEN HEADS WITH WHITE NECK RINGS; CHESTNUT BREAST, YELLOW BILL, BLUE SPECULUM, AND WHITE TAIL.

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: GRASSY AREAS, LAKES, VARIOUS BODIES OF WATER

HABITAT: LOOK FOR THEM ON LAKES, PONDS, MARSHES, RIVERS, AND COASTAL HABITATS, AS WELL AS CITY AND SUBURBAN PARKS AND RESIDENTIAL BACKYARDS.

BEHAVIOR: MALLARDS ARE "DABBLING DUCKS"—THEY FEED IN THE WATER BY TIPPING FORWARD AND GRAZING ON UNDERWATER PLANTS. THEY ALMOST NEVER DIVE.

RANDOM FACTS: THE MALLARD IS THE ANCESTOR OF NEARLY ALL DOMESTIC DUCK BREEDS (EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE MUSCOVY DUCK).





VOICE:



AMERICAN WIGEON

MARECA AMERICANA

ORDER: ANSERIFORMES

FAMILY: ANATIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 20-23" INCHES IN LENGTH, AMERICAN WIGEONS HAVE A BROWN BODY: GRAYISH NECK WITH GREEN FACE PATCH AND WHITE CROWN: LARGE WHITE PATCH ON FOREWING.

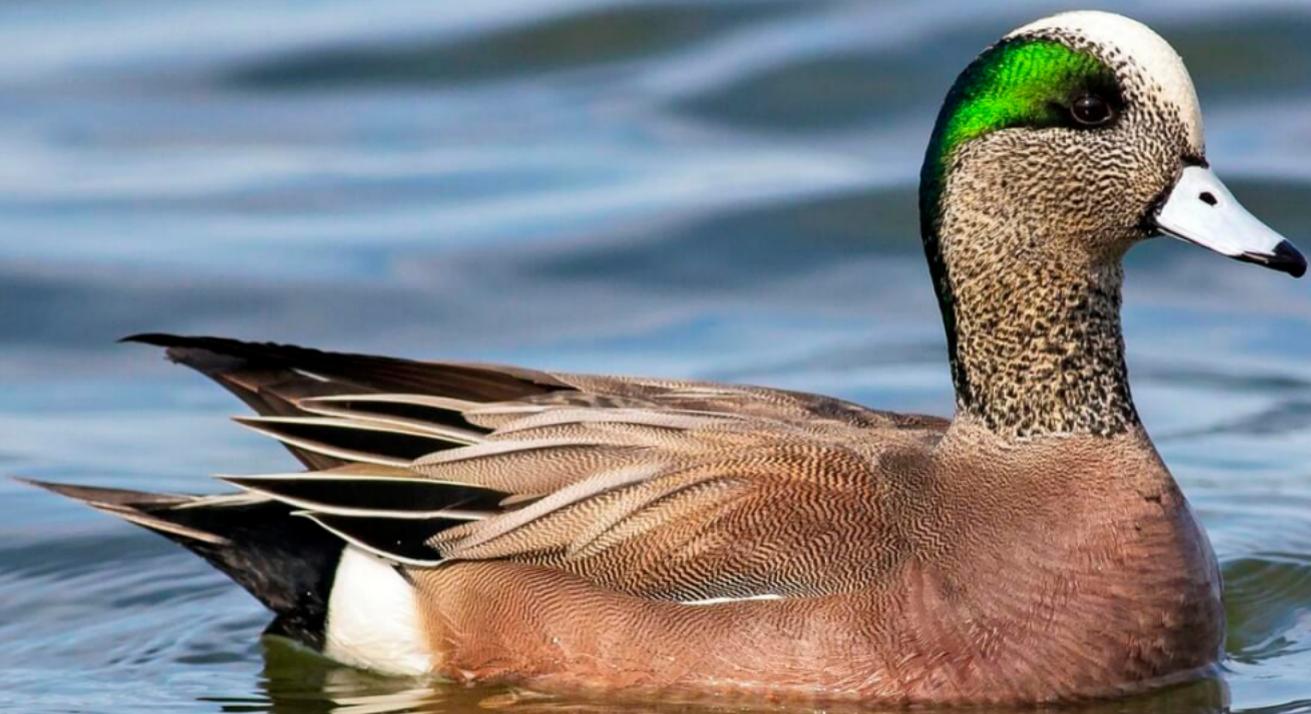
BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: WETLANDS, PONDS, NEARBY AGRICULTURAL FIELDS

HABITAT: AT ALL TIMES OF YEAR, AMERICAN WIGEONS CAN BE FOUND IN FRESHWATER WETLANDS, LAKES, SLOW-MOVING RIVERS, IMPOUNDMENTS, FLOODED FIELDS, ESTUARIES, BAYS, AND MARSHES.

BEHAVIOR: AMERICAN WIGEONS USUALLY CONGREGATE ON LAKES AND PLACES WHERE THERE IS AMPLE AQUATIC VEGETATION. THEY ALSO WADDLE THROUGH FIELDS PLUCKING AT PLANTS WITH THEIR SHORT BILL.

RANDOM FACTS: WHEN YOUNG ARE DISTURBED, FEMALE WIGEONS WILL FEIGN INJURY WHILE THE BABIES HIDE. AMERICAN WIGEONS USED TO BE CALLED "BALDPATE" BECAUSE THE WHITE HEAD STRIPE LOOKS LIKE A BALD MAN'S HEAD





VOICE:



LESSER SCAUP

AYTHYA AFFINIS

ORDER: ANSERIFORMES

FAMILY: ANATIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 11-13" INCHES IN LENGTH, LESSER SCAUPS HAVE GLOSSY PURPLE AND GREEN HEADS: PEAKED CROWN BEHIND THE EYE: WHITE STRIPES ON WINGS: WHITE UNDERPARTS

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: LAKES, PONDS, ESTUARIES, RESERVOIRS

HABITAT: LESSER SCAUPS, LIKE MOST WATERFOWL, CAN BE FOUND BY VARIOUS BODIES OF WATER. DURING THE BREEDING SEASON, THEY ARE MORE COMMONLY FOUND IN MARSHES OF NORTHERN NORTH AMERICA WHERE THEY NEST.

BEHAVIOR: DURING MIGRATION AND WINTER, LESSER SCAUP FORM LARGE FLOCKS ON LAKES, BAYS, RIVERS, AND LARGER WETLANDS. THEY TEND TO FORM TIGHT GROUPS AND MIX WITH OTHER DIVING DUCKS.

RANDOM FACTS: IT IS ONE OF THE MOST ABUNDANT AND WIDESPREAD OF THE DIVING DUCKS IN NORTH AMERICA. AN ADULT MAY PRETEND TO BE DEAD (IMMOBILE WITH HEAD EXTENDED, EYES OPEN, AND WINGS HELD CLOSE TO BODY) WHEN GRASPED BY A RED FOX.





VOICE:



BUFFLEHEAD

BUCEPHALA ALBEOLA

ORDER: ANSERIFORMES

FAMILY: ANATIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 11-13" INCHES IN LENGTH, BUFFLEHEADS ARE BLACK ABOVE AND WHITE BELOW: LARGE WHITE PATCH ON HEAD AGAINST PURPLE-GLOSSED FOREHEAD AND NAPE.

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: LAKES, PONDS, ESTUARIES

HABITAT: BUFFLEHEAD MOVE SOUTH TO COASTS AND LARGE BODIES OF WATER, PARTICULARLY SHALLOW SALTWATER BAYS. THEY BREED NEAR LAKES IN NORTHERN FORESTS WHERE CONIFERS MIX WITH POPLARS OR ASPENS. BUFFLEHEAD NEST IN TREE CAVITIES, ESPECIALLY OLD NORTHERN FLICKER HOLES.

BEHAVIOR: OFTEN SEEN DIVING UNDERWATER TO CATCH AQUATIC INVERTEBRATES. WHEN COURTING FEMALES, MALE BUFFLEHEADS SWIM IN FRONT OF THEM, RAPIDLY BOBBING THEIR HEADS UP AND DOWN.

RANDOM FACTS: GENERALLY MONOGAMOUS, MEANING THEY TEND TO HAVE ONLY ONE MATE. BUFFLEHEAD FOSSILS DATE BACK TO 500,000 YEARS AGO!





VOICE:



COMMON GOLDENEYE

BUCEPHALA CLANGULA

ORDER: ANSERIFORMES

FAMILY: ANATIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 15-17" INCHES IN LENGTH, THE COMMON GOLDENEYE HAS A ROUND GLOSSY GREEN HEAD WITH WHITE PATCH NEAR BASE OF BILL: WHITE NECK, BREAST AND SIDES: BLACK BACK WITH WHITE STRIPES

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: LAKES AND PONDS

HABITAT: THEY NEST IN TREE CAVITIES IN THE BOREAL FOREST OF NORTHERN NORTH AMERICA. THEY SPEND WINTERS MAINLY IN PROTECTED COASTAL WATERS AS WELL AS ON LARGE INLAND LAKES AND RIVERS.

BEHAVIOR: THESE ARE DIVING DUCKS THAT OFTEN FORAGE IN FLOCKS AND DIVE SIMULTANEOUSLY. THEY TEND TO FORAGE IN FAIRLY SHALLOW WATERS. WHEN FEMALES ARE NEARBY, MALES DISPLAY BY STRETCHING THE HEAD BACKWARD AGAINST THEIR BACK AND THEN POPPING THEIR HEAD FORWARD.

RANDOM FACTS: KNOWN TO BENEFIT FROM LAKE ACIDIFICATION, A RESULT OF NATURAL OR HUMAN-CAUSED REASONS. FISH DO NOT SURVIVE WELL IN ACIDIC LAKES, WHICH RESULTS IN LESS COMPETITION OF THE ACID-TOLERANT INSECTS FOR THE GOLDENEYE.





VOICE:



AMERICAN COOT

FULICA AMERICANA

ORDER: GRUIFORMES

FAMILY: RALLIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 11-13" INCHES IN LENGTH, AMERICAN COOTS HAVE A BLACK HEAD AND NECK; WHITISH BILL, WHITE PATCH UNDER TAIL; LOBED FEET WITH LARGE TOES

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: LAKES AND PONDS

HABITAT: AMERICAN COOTS ARE LIKELY TO BE SEEN AT PONDS IN CITY PARKS, MARSHES, RESERVOIRS, LAKES, AND IN ROADSIDE DITCHES, SEWAGE TREATMENT PONDS, AND SALTWATER INLETS OR SALTMARSHES.

BEHAVIOR: WHEN SWIMMING THEY LOOK LIKE SMALL DUCKS (AND OFTEN DIVE), BUT ON LAND THEY LOOK MORE CHICKENLIKE, WALKING RATHER THAN WADDLING. AN AWKWARD AND OFTEN CLUMSY FLIER, THE AMERICAN COOT REQUIRES LONG RUNNING TAKEOFFS TO GET AIRBORNE.

RANDOM FACTS: THE OLDEST KNOWN AMERICAN COOT LIVED TO BE AT LEAST 22 YEARS 4 MONTHS OLD. AMERICAN COOTS BREED LOCALLY IN GOLDEN GATE PARK, LAKE MERCED, AND THE PRESIDIO. THEY ARE ALSO NOT A DUCK! THEY ARE ACTUALLY IN THE RAIL FAMILY





VOICE:



RUDDY DUCK

OXYURA JAMAICENSIS

ORDER: GRUIFORMES
FAMILY: RALLIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 14-16" INCHES IN LENGTH, RUDDY DUCKS HAVE A RUSTY-RED BODY: WHITE CHEEKS AND UNDERPARTS: BLACK CAP AND BRIGHT BLUE BILL, STIFF TAIL

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: MARSHES

HABITAT: THEY NEST IN MARSHES NEAR LAKES AND PONDS. IN MIGRATION, THEY FLOCK TO LARGE RIVERS, PONDS, LAKES, AND ESTUARIES.

BEHAVIOR: RUDDY DUCKS DIVE TO FEED ON AQUATIC INVERTEBRATES, ESPECIALLY MIDGE LARVAE. THEY FEED MOST ACTIVELY AT NIGH, SO YOU'LL OFTEN SEE RUDDY DUCKS SLEEPING DURING THE DAY, HEAD TUCKED UNDER A WING AND TAIL COCKED UP.

RANDOM FACTS: PLEISTOCENE FOSSILS OF RUDDY DUCKS, AT LEAST 11,000 YEARS OLD, HAVE BEEN UNEARTHED IN OREGON, CALIFORNIA, VIRGINIA, FLORIDA, AND ILLINOIS. RUDDY DUCKS GET HARASSED BY HORNED GREBES, PIED-BILLED GREBES, AND AMERICAN COOTS DURING BREEDING SEASON. THE GREBES SOMETIMES ATTACK RUDDY DUCKS FROM BELOW THE WATER, A BEHAVIOR KNOWN AS "SUBMARINING".





VOICE:



RED - BREASTED MERGANSER

MERGUS SERRATOR

ORDER: ANSERIFORMES

FAMILY: ANATIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 20-23" INCHES IN LENGTH, RED - BREASTED MERGANSERS HAVE GLOSSY GREEN HEADS WITH CREST: REDDISH BILL, WHITE NECK AND SIDES: STREAKED BREAST, BLACK BACK

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: LAKES AND PONDS

HABITAT: BREEDS ON FRESH, BRACKISH, AND SALTWATER WETLANDS, TYPICALLY CLOSE TO THE COAST. DURING MIGRATION AND ON THE WINTERING GROUNDS, USES MARINE WATERS, LAKES, AND RIVERS.

BEHAVIOR: RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS TEND TO SIT LOW IN THE WATER AND FLY AT AN ANGLE WITH THE HEAD HIGHER THAN THEIR FEET. THEY SWIM WITH THE HEAD PARTIALLY SUBMERGED, DIVING UNDERWATER TO CAPTURE SMALL FISH WITH THEIR SERRATED BILL.

RANDOM FACTS: RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS NEED TO EAT 15 TO 20 FISH PER DAY, WHICH RESEARCHERS SUGGEST MEANS THEY NEED TO DIVE UNDERWATER 250-300 TIMES PER DAY OR FORAGE FOR 4-5 HOURS TO MEET THEIR ENERGY NEEDS.





VOICE:



SURF SCOTER

MELANITTA PERSPICILLATA

ORDER: ANSERIFORMES

FAMILY: ANATIDAE

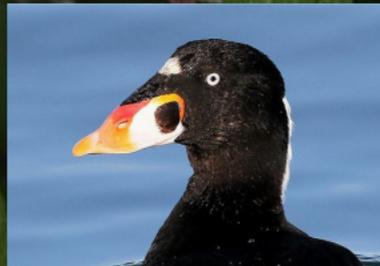
SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 18-21" INCHES IN LENGTH, THE SURF SCOTER HAS BLACK WITH WHITE PATCHES ON ITS' FOREHEAD AND NAPE: BLACK AND YELLOW AND ORANGE BILL ENLARGED AT THE BASE: WHITE EYES

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: NEAR THE OCEAN

HABITAT: THEY ARE MOST EASILY FOUND IN MIGRATION AND WINTER, WHEN THEY OCCUR ALONG OCEAN COASTS, BAYS, AND ESTUARIES.

BEHAVIOR: SURF SCOTERS REST ON THE WATER'S SURFACE AND DIVE FOR THEIR PREY. FLOCKS OF THOUSANDS CAN BE SEEN IN MIGRATION ALONG OCEAN COASTS. THEY BEGIN COURTSHIP DISPLAYS SOON AFTER SETTLING IN ON THEIR WINTERING GROUNDS, ESPECIALLY ON CALM DAYS.

RANDOM FACTS: SURF SCOTERS ARE "MOLT MIGRANTS," MEANING THAT ADULTS FLY TO AN AREA WHERE THEY CAN MOLT THEIR FLIGHT FEATHERS. THEY BRIEFLY BECOME FLIGHTLESS BEFORE CONTINUING TO THEIR WINTERING RANGE: MOLTING AREAS PROVIDE SOME PROTECTION FROM WEATHER AND PREDATORS. THESE SPOTS INCLUDE SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA TO WASHINGTON'S PUGET SOUND, AND QUEBEC AND NEW BRUNSWICK.





A brown pelican with a long, pointed beak is perched on a log. The bird is facing right, and its feathers are a mix of brown and dark blue. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

BIRDS: PICTURED AND DESCRIBED

DIVERS

DIVERS HAVE EARNED THEIR NAME BY THE WAY THEY HUNT. PELICANS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE OFTEN SEEN PLUMMETING FROM THE SKY AND INTO WATER TO QUICKLY SCOOP UP FISH. THE GROUP INCLUDE LOONS, GREBES, CORMORANTS, AND PELICANS. DIVER BIRDS OFTEN HAVE LONG NECKS AND WEBBED FEET TO ENABLE THEM TO MOVE FROM FLOATING TO DIVING POSITION QUICKLY TO CATCH PREY.

VOICE:



COMMON LOON

GAVIA IMMER

ORDER: GAVIIFORMES

FAMILY: GAVIIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 24-26" INCHES IN LENGTH, COMMON LOONS HAVE A BLACK HEAD WITH DAGGER-LIKE BILL; LONG BODY, BROKEN WHITE NECKLACE, GRAY CHECKERED BACK, RED EYES

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING; LAKES AND PONDS

HABITAT: BREED ON REMOTE FRESHWATER LAKES OF THE NORTHERN U.S. AND CANADA, AND THEY ARE SENSITIVE TO HUMAN DISTURBANCE. IN WINTER AND DURING MIGRATION, LOOK FOR THEM ON LAKES, RIVERS, ESTUARIES, AND COASTLINES.

BEHAVIOR: COMMON LOONS ARE STEALTHY DIVERS, SUBMERGING WITHOUT A SPLASH TO CATCH FISH. PAIRS AND GROUPS OFTEN CALL TO EACH OTHER AT NIGHT. IN FLIGHT, NOTICE THEIR SHALLOW WINGBEATS AND UNWAVERING, BEE-LINED FLIGHT PATH.

RANDOM FACTS: BIOLOGISTS ESTIMATE THAT LOON PARENTS AND THEIR 2 CHICKS CAN EAT ABOUT A HALF-TON OF FISH OVER A 15-WEEK PERIOD. THE OLDEST RECORDED COMMON LOON WAS A FEMALE, AND AT LEAST 29 YEARS AND 10 MONTHS OLD WHEN SHE WAS SPOTTED IN MICHIGAN IN 2016.





VOICE:



WESTERN GREBE

AECHMOPHORUS OCCIDENTALIS

ORDER: PODICIPEDIFORMES

FAMILY: PODICIPEDIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 23-27" INCHES IN LENGTH, THE WESTERN GREBE HAS A BLACK HEAD WITH DARK GRAY BACK; WHITE THROAT, LONG YELLOW BILL, WHITE BELOW, REDDISH EYES

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: LAKES AND PONDS

HABITAT: BREEDING BIRDS USE FRESHWATER LAKES; NONBREEDING BIRDS ARE FOUND IN BOTH FRESHWATER AND SALTWATER ENVIRONMENTS, THOUGH NEVER FAR FROM SHORE IN OCEANS.

BEHAVIOR: WESTERN GREBES ARE ALMOST ALWAYS IN THE WATER. THEY CAN DISAPPEAR FOR LONG PERIODS DURING DIVES. COURTING BIRDS HAVE A CAPTIVATING DISPLAY IN WHICH THE PAIR RACES SIDE BY SIDE ACROSS THE WATER, THEIR NECKS GRACEFULLY CURVED AND BILLS POINTED TO THE SKY.

RANDOM FACTS: WESTERN GREBES, ALONG WITH OTHER GREBE SPECIES, OFTEN SWALLOW THEIR OWN FEATHERS AS THEY PREEN. THESE FEATHERS WIND UP LINING THE STOMACH, WHERE THEY MAY HELP PROTECT AGAINST PUNCTURES BY SHARP FISH BONES.





VOICE:



EARED GREBE

PODICEPS NIGRICOLLIS

ORDER: PODICIPEDIFORMES

FAMILY: PODICIPEDIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 11-13" INCHES IN LENGTH, EARED GREBES HAVE A SLENDER BLACK NECK AND FACE: SHORT SLIGHTLY UPTURNED BILL, PEAKED CROWN: GOLDEN EAR PLUMES BEHIND RED EYES: BROWN FLANKS, SHORT TAIL

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: LAKES AND PONDS

HABITAT: BREEDS IN SHALLOW LAKES AND PONDS. DURING MIGRATION AND IN WINTER PREFERS SALTWATER. OCCURS IN GREAT NUMBERS IN SUPER SALTY WATERS WITH AN ABUNDANT SUPPLY OF BRINE SHRIMP AND FLIES.

BEHAVIOR: THIS SOCIAL BIRD BREEDS IN COLONIES AND GATHERS IN FLOCKS FROM THE HUNDREDS TO THE THOUSANDS ON LAKES AND PONDS DURING MIGRATION AND WINTER. THEY JUMP UP SLIGHTLY BEFORE DIVING UNDERWATER FOR AQUATIC INVERTEBRATES.

RANDOM FACTS: THE EARED GREBE MIGRATES ONLY AT NIGHT. BECAUSE OF THE LENGTH OF ITS STAY AT FALL STAGING AREAS, ITS SOUTHWARD FALL MIGRATION IS THE LATEST OF ANY BIRD SPECIES IN NORTH AMERICA.





VOICE:



BROWN PELICAN

PELECANUS OCCIDENTALIS

ORDER: PELECANIFORMES

FAMILY: PELECANIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 44-46" INCHES IN LENGTH: BROWN WITH A WHITE HEAD: HUGE DARK BILL WITH LARGE THROAT POUCH: LONG CURVED NECK

BEST SEEN: SUMMER, FALL, WINTER: OCEANS

HABITAT: BROWN PELICANS LIVE ALONG SOUTHERN AND WESTERN SEA COASTS AND ARE RARELY SEEN INLAND.

BEHAVIOR: BROWN PELICANS PLUNGE INTO THE WATER TO FEED, STUNNING FISH WITH THEIR IMPACT AND SCOOPING THEM UP IN THEIR THROAT POUCHES. IN FLIGHT, LINES OF PELICANS GLIDE ON THEIR BROAD WINGS, OFTEN SURFING UPDRAFTS ALONG WAVE FACES.

RANDOM FACTS: PELICANS INCUBATE THEIR EGGS WITH THE SKIN OF THEIR FEET, ESSENTIALLY STANDING ON THE EGGS TO KEEP THEM WARM. THE PESTICIDE DDT CAUSED PELICANS TO LAY THINNER EGGS THAT CRACKED UNDER THE WEIGHT OF INCUBATING PARENTS. AFTER NEARLY DISAPPEARING IN THE 1960S AND 1970S, BROWN PELICANS MADE A FULL COMEBACK THANKS TO PESTICIDE REGULATIONS. THE OLDEST BROWN PELICAN ON RECORD WAS 43 YEARS OF AGE.





VOICE:



DOUBLE - CRESTED CORMORANT

NANNOPTERUM AURITUM

ORDER: SULIFORMES

FAMILY: PHALACROCORACIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 30-32" INCHES IN LENGTH: CORMORANTS HAVE DARK BODIES, LONG NECK, CREST SELDOM EVIDENT: STRAIGHT BILL WITH HOOKED TIP: ORANGE THROAT POUCH, LONG TAIL

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: LAKES AND PONDS

HABITAT: DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS ARE THE MOST WIDESPREAD CORMORANT IN NORTH AMERICA, AND THE ONE MOST FREQUENTLY SEEN IN FRESHWATER. THEY BREED ON THE COAST AND ON LARGE INLAND LAKES. THEY FORM COLONIES OF STICK NESTS BUILT HIGH IN TREES ON ISLANDS.

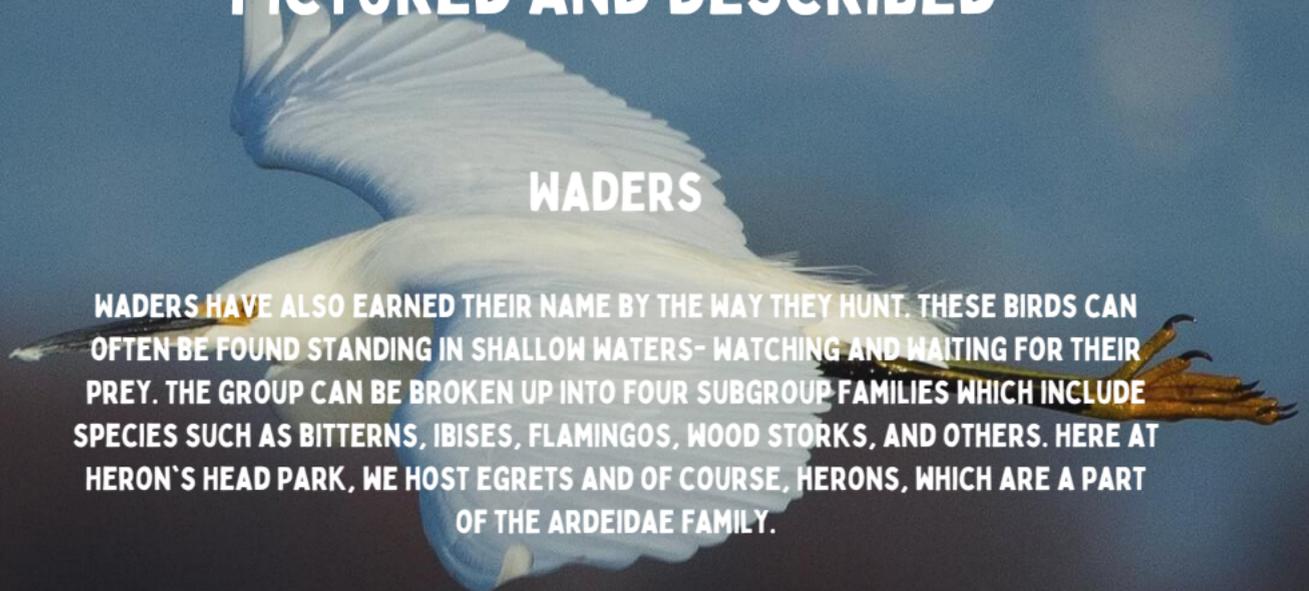
BEHAVIOR: FLOAT LOW ON THE SURFACE OF WATER AND DIVE TO CATCH SMALL FISH. AFTER FISHING, THEY STAND ON DOCKS, ROCKS, AND TREE LIMBS WITH WINGS SPREAD OPEN TO DRY.

RANDOM FACTS: IN BREEDING COLONIES WHERE THE NESTS ARE PLACED ON THE GROUND, YOUNG CORMORANTS LEAVE THEIR NESTS AND CONGREGATE INTO GROUPS WITH OTHER YOUNGSTERS (CRECHES). THEY RETURN TO THEIR OWN NESTS TO BE FED.





BIRDS: PICTURED AND DESCRIBED

A white egret is shown in flight against a clear blue sky. The bird's wings are fully extended, showing the intricate structure of the feathers. Its long neck is tucked back, and its long, thin legs are trailing behind. The bird is positioned centrally in the upper half of the frame.

WADERS

WADERS HAVE ALSO EARNED THEIR NAME BY THE WAY THEY HUNT. THESE BIRDS CAN OFTEN BE FOUND STANDING IN SHALLOW WATERS- WATCHING AND WAITING FOR THEIR PREY. THE GROUP CAN BE BROKEN UP INTO FOUR SUBGROUP FAMILIES WHICH INCLUDE SPECIES SUCH AS BITTERNs, IBISes, FLAMINGOs, WOOD STORKS, AND OTHERS. HERE AT HERON'S HEAD PARK, WE HOST EGRETS AND OF COURSE, HERONS, WHICH ARE A PART OF THE ARDEIDAE FAMILY.

VOICE:



GREAT BLUE HERON

ARDEA HERODIAS

ORDER: PELECANIFORMES

FAMILY: ARDEIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 38-53" INCHES IN LENGTH: TALL, SLATE-BLUE BODY: WHITE HEAD WITH BLACK STRIPE: LONG NECK, WHITE UNDERPARTS, POINTED BILL, LONG LEGS

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: MARSHES

HABITAT: SALT AND FRESH WATER HABITATS, FROM OPEN COASTS, MARSHES, SLOUGHS, RIVERBANKS, AND LAKES TO BACKYARD GOLDFISH PONDS. BREEDING BIRDS GATHER IN COLONIES OR "HERONRIES" TO BUILD STICK NESTS HIGH OFF THE GROUND.

BEHAVIOR: HUNTING HERONS WADE SLOWLY OR STAND STATUE-LIKE, STALKING PREY IN SHALLOW WATER OR OPEN FIELDS. THEIR VERY SLOW WINGBEATS, TUCKED-IN NECK AND TRAILING LEGS CREATE AN UNMISTAKABLE IMAGE IN FLIGHT.

RANDOM FACTS: DESPITE THEIR IMPRESSIVE SIZE, GREAT BLUE HERONS WEIGH ONLY 5 TO 6 POUNDS THANKS IN PART TO THEIR HOLLOW BONES—A FEATURE ALL BIRDS SHARE.





VOICE:



SNOWY EGRET

EGRETTA THULA

ORDER: PELECANIFORMES

FAMILY: ARDEIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 22-24" INCHES IN LENGTH: SNOW WHITE HEAD WITH PLUMES ON NECK: SLENDER BLACK BILL, YELLOW EYES, BLACK LEGS WITH BRIGHT YELLOW FEET

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: MARSHES

HABITAT: MOST COMMON ALONG THE COAST, THOUGH THEY DO BREED IN INLAND WETLANDS. SNOWY EGRETS NEST COLONIAALLY. THEY CONCENTRATE ON MUDFLATS, BEACHES, AND WETLANDS, BUT ALSO FORAGE IN WET AGRICULTURAL FIELDS AND ALONG THE EDGES OF RIVERS AND LAKES.

BEHAVIOR: MADE IN SHALLOW WATER TO SPEAR FISH AND OTHER SMALL AQUATIC ANIMALS. WHILE THEY OFTEN SIT AND WAIT TO CAPTURE THEIR FOOD, SOMETIMES THEY ARE MUCH MORE ANIMATED, RUNNING BACK AND FORTH THROUGH THE WATER WITH THEIR WINGS SPREAD, CHASING THEIR PREY.

RANDOM FACTS: SNOWY EGRETS SOMETIMES MATE WITH OTHER HERON SPECIES AND PRODUCE HYBRID OFFSPRING. THEY HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO HYBRIDIZE WITH TRICOLORED HERONS, LITTLE BLUE HERONS, AND CATTLE EGRETS.





VOICE:



GREAT EGRET

ARDEA ALBA

ORDER: PELECANIFORMES

FAMILY: ARDEIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 37-39" INCHES IN LENGTH; SLENDER SNOW-WHITE BODY WITH PLUMES ON LONG SLIM NECK; POINTED YELLOW BILL, BLACK LEGS AND FEET

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: MARSHES

HABITAT: YOU'LL FIND GREAT EGRETS IN BOTH FRESHWATER AND SALTWATER HABITATS. THEY ARE COLONIAL NESTERS, TYPICALLY PLACING STICK NESTS HIGH IN TREES, OFTEN ON ISLANDS THAT ARE ISOLATED FROM MAMMALIAN PREDATORS SUCH AS RACCOONS.

BEHAVIOR: MADE IN SHALLOW WATER (BOTH FRESH AND SALT) TO HUNT FISH, FROGS, AND OTHER SMALL AQUATIC ANIMALS. THEY TYPICALLY STAND STILL AND WATCH FOR UNSUSPECTING PREY TO PASS BY. THEN, WITH STARTLING SPEED, THE EGRETS STRIKE WITH A JAB OF THEIR LONG NECK AND BILL..

RANDOM FACTS: THE GREAT EGRET IS THE SYMBOL OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, ONE OF THE OLDEST ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA. AUDUBON WAS FOUNDED TO PROTECT BIRDS FROM BEING KILLED FOR THEIR FEATHERS.





VOICE:



BLACK - CROWNED NIGHT HERON

NYCTICORAX NYCTICORAX

ORDER: PELECANIFORMES

FAMILY: ARDEIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 24-28" INCHES IN LENGTH: WHITE FACE AND UNDERPARTS: BLACKISH CROWN AND BACK: SHORT THICK NECK, GRAY WINGS WITH SHORT TAIL

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: MARSHES

HABITAT: THESE ARE SOCIAL BIRDS THAT TEND TO ROOST AND NEST IN GROUPS, ALTHOUGH THEY TYPICALLY FORAGE ON THEIR OWN. LOOK FOR THEM IN MOST WETLAND HABITATS ACROSS NORTH AMERICA, INCLUDING ESTUARIES, MARSHES, STREAMS, LAKES, AND RESERVOIRS.

BEHAVIOR: SPEND DAYS PERCHED ON TREE LIMBS OR CONCEALED AMONG FOLIAGE AND BRANCHES. THEY FORAGE IN THE EVENING AND AT NIGHT, IN WATER, ON MUDFLATS, AND ON LAND. IN FLIGHT THEY FOLD THEIR HEAD BACK AGAINST THEIR SHOULDERS, ALMOST MAKING THE NECK DISAPPEAR.

RANDOM FACTS: SCIENTISTS FIND IT EASY, IF A BIT SMELLY AND MESSY, TO STUDY THE DIET OF YOUNG BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS—THE NESTLINGS OFTEN DISGORGE THEIR STOMACH CONTENTS WHEN APPROACHED.





VOICE:



GREEN HERON

BUTORIDES VIRESCENS

ORDER: PELECANIFORMES

FAMILY: ARDEIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 19-22" INCHES IN LENGTH: DARK GREENISH BODY; CRESTED HEAD, BLUE-GREEN BACK, RUSTY-RED NECK, SHORT GREENISH-YELLOW LEGS

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: MARSHES

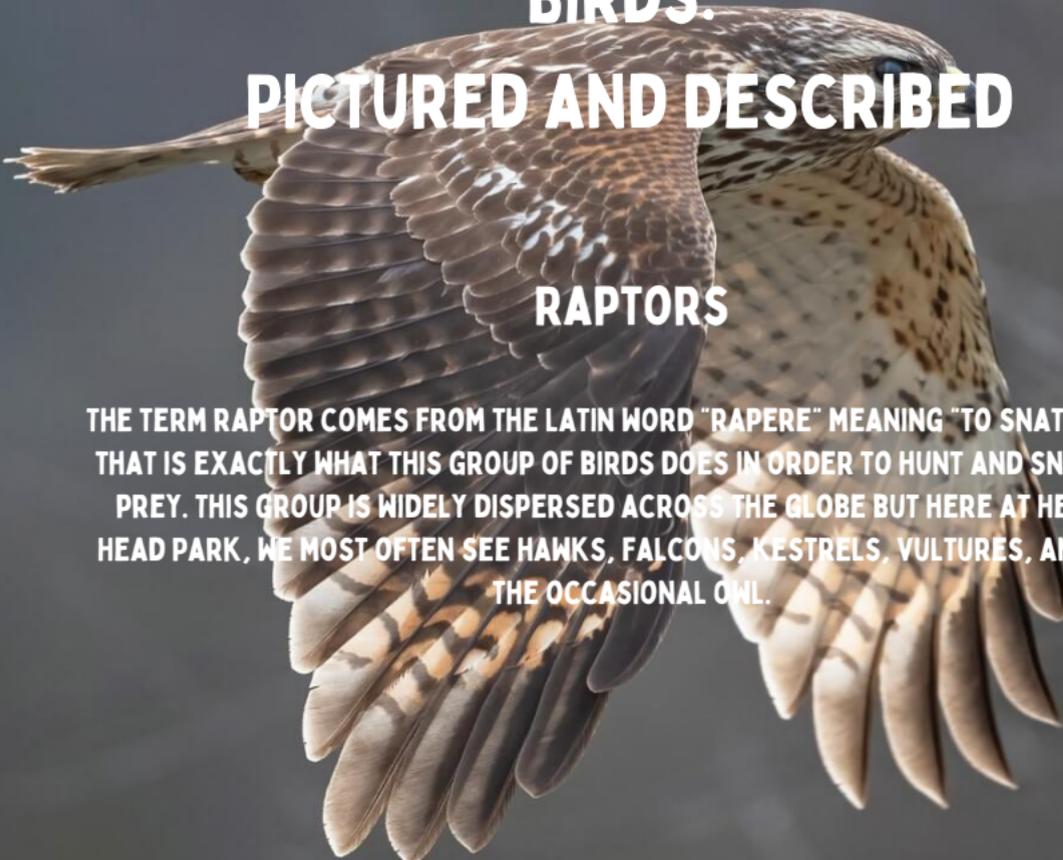
HABITAT: GREEN HERONS LIVE AROUND WOODED PONDS, MARSHES, RIVERS, RESERVOIRS, AND ESTUARIES.

BEHAVIOR: STAND MOTIONLESS AT THE WATER'S EDGE AS THEY HUNT FOR FISH AND AMPHIBIANS. THEY TYPICALLY STAND ON VEGETATION OR SOLID GROUND, AND THEY DON'T WADE AS OFTEN AS LARGER HERONS. IN FLIGHT THESE COMPACT HERONS CAN LOOK UNGAINLY, OFTEN PARTIALLY UNCROOKING THEIR NECKS TO GIVE A FRONT-HEAVY APPEARANCE.

RANDOM FACTS: THE GREEN HERON IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S FEW TOOL-USING BIRD SPECIES. IT OFTEN CREATES FISHING LURES WITH BREAD CRUSTS, INSECTS, AND FEATHERS, DROPPING THEM ON THE SURFACE OF THE WATER TO ENTICE SMALL FISH.







BIRDS: PICTURED AND DESCRIBED

RAPTORS

THE TERM RAPTOR COMES FROM THE LATIN WORD "RAPERE" MEANING "TO SNATCH", AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT THIS GROUP OF BIRDS DOES IN ORDER TO HUNT AND SNATCH UP PREY. THIS GROUP IS WIDELY DISPERSED ACROSS THE GLOBE BUT HERE AT HERON'S HEAD PARK, WE MOST OFTEN SEE HAWKS, FALCONS, KESTRELS, VULTURES, AND EVEN THE OCCASIONAL OWL.

VOICE:



RED -TAILED HAWK

BUTEO JAMAICENSIS

ORDER: ACCIPITRIFORMES

FAMILY: ACCIPITRIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 22-25" INCHES IN LENGTH; DARK BROWN, WHITISH NECK AND UNDERPARTS; BROAD WINGED, WIDE RED TAIL WITH BARRED EDGES

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: FORESTS

HABITAT: THE RED-TAILED HAWK IS A BIRD OF OPEN COUNTRY. LOOK FOR IT ALONG FIELDS AND PERCHED ON TELEPHONE POLES, FENCEPOSTS, OR TREES STANDING ALONE OR ALONG EDGES OF FIELDS.

BEHAVIOR: YOU'LL MOST LIKELY SEE RED-TAILED HAWKS SOARING IN WIDE CIRCLES HIGH OVER A FIELD. IN HIGH WINDS THEY MAY FACE INTO THE WIND AND HOVER WITHOUT FLAPPING, EYES FIXED ON THE GROUND. THEY ATTACK IN A SLOW, CONTROLLED DIVE WITH LEGS OUTSTRETCHED.

RANDOM FACTS: COURTING HAWKS SOAR IN CIRCLES AT GREAT HEIGHTS. THE MALE DIVES, THEN SHOOTS UP AGAIN. SOMETIMES, THE PAIR GRAB ONTO ONE OTHER, CLASP TALONS, AND PLUMMET IN SPIRALS TOWARD THE GROUND BEFORE PULLING AWAY.





VOICE:



COOPER'S HAWK

ACCIPITER COOPERII

ORDER: ACCIPITRIFORMES

FAMILY: ACCIPITRIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 15-16" INCHES IN LENGTH: DARK CAP, RED EYES, DARK BROWN ABOVE: RUSTY BARRED CHEST, ROUNDED TAIL WITH WIDE WHITE BANDS AND WHITE TIP

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: FORESTS

HABITAT: WOODED HABITATS FROM DEEP FORESTS TO LEAFY SUBDIVISIONS AND BACKYARDS.

BEHAVIOR: FLY WITH A FLAP-FLAP-GLIDE PATTERN TYPICAL OF ACCIPITERS. ANOTHER ATTACK MANEUVER IS TO FLY FAST AND LOW TO THE GROUND, THEN UP AND OVER AN OBSTRUCTION TO SURPRISE PREY ON THE OTHER SIDE.

RANDOM FACTS: LIFE IS TRICKY FOR MALE COOPER'S HAWKS. AS IN MOST HAWKS, MALES ARE SIGNIFICANTLY SMALLER THAN THEIR MATES. THE DANGER IS THAT FEMALE COOPER'S HAWKS SPECIALIZE IN EATING MEDIUM-SIZED BIRDS. MALES TEND TO BE SUBMISSIVE TO FEMALES AND TO LISTEN OUT FOR REASSURING CALL NOTES THE FEMALES MAKE WHEN THEY'RE WILLING TO BE APPROACHED.





VOICE:



RED - SHOULDERED HAWK

BUTEO LINEATUS

ORDER: ACCIPITRIFORMES

FAMILY: ACCIPITRIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 18-24" INCHES IN LENGTH; BROWN ABOVE, DARK CHECKERED WINGS WITH RUFOUS SHOULDERS; REDDISH-BROWN BELOW; LONG DARK TAIL WITH NARROW WHITE BANDS

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: FORESTS

HABITAT: LOOK IN DECIDUOUS WOODLANDS, OFTEN NEAR RIVERS AND SWAMPS. THEY BUILD STICK NESTS IN A MAIN CROTCH OF A LARGE TREE. DURING MIGRATION, RED-SHOULDERED HAWKS OFTEN MOVE HIGH OVERHEAD ALONG RIDGES OR ALONG THE COAST.

BEHAVIOR: RED-SHOULDERED HAWKS SOAR OVER FORESTS OR PERCH ON TREE BRANCHES OR UTILITY WIRES. ITS RISING, WHISTLED KEE-RAH IS A DISTINCTIVE SOUND OF THE FOREST. THEY HUNT SMALL MAMMALS, AMPHIBIANS, AND REPTILES EITHER FROM PERCHES OR WHILE FLYING.

RANDOM FACTS: RED-SHOULDERED HAWKS RETURN TO THE SAME NESTING TERRITORY YEAR AFTER YEAR. ONE RED-SHOULDERED HAWK OCCUPIED A TERRITORY IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FOR 16 CONSECUTIVE YEARS.





VOICE:



AMERICAN KESTREL

FALCO SPARVERIUS

ORDER: FALCONIFORMES

FAMILY: FALCONIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 10-11" INCHES IN LENGTH: BLACK AND WHITE FACE WITH TWO DARK SLASHES: RUSSET-BROWN BACK AND TAIL: BLUE-GRAY WINGS

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: GRASSLANDS

HABITAT: RANGING FROM DESERTS AND GRASSLANDS TO ALPINE MEADOWS. YOU'RE MOST LIKELY TO SEE THEM PERCHING ON TELEPHONE WIRES ALONG ROADSIDES, IN OPEN COUNTRY WITH SHORT VEGETATION AND FEW TREES.

BEHAVIOR: USUALLY SNATCH PREY FROM THE GROUND, THOUGH SOME CATCH QUARRY ON THE WING. THEY ARE GRACEFULLY BUOYANT IN FLIGHT, AND ARE SMALL ENOUGH TO GET TOSSED AROUND IN THE WIND. WHEN PERCHED, KESTRELS OFTEN PUMP THEIR TAILS AS IF THEY ARE TRYING TO BALANCE.

RANDOM FACTS: BIRDS CAN SEE ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT. THIS ENABLES KESTRELS TO MAKE OUT THE TRAILS OF URINE THAT VOLES, A COMMON PREY MAMMAL, LEAVE AS THEY RUN ALONG THE GROUND. LIKE NEON DINER SIGNS, THESE BRIGHT PATHS HIGHLIGHT THE WAY TO A MEAL.





VOICE:



MERLIN FALCON

FALCO COLUMBARIUS

ORDER: FALCONIFORMES

FAMILY: FALCONIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 9-12" INCHES IN LENGTH: GRAY TO DARK-GRAY, STREAKED CHEST AND DARK UNDERWINGS: DARK TAIL WITH NARROW WHITE BANDS: NO MALAR OR "MUSTACHE" STRIPE

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER: FORESTS

HABITAT: MERLINS NEST IN FORESTED AREAS AND ALONG RIVERS ACROSS NORTHERN NORTH AMERICA. DURING MIGRATION AND WINTER, BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR MERLINS IN OPEN FORESTS, GRASSLANDS, AND ESPECIALLY COASTAL AREAS WITH FLOCKS OF SMALL SONGBIRDS OR SHOREBIRDS.

BEHAVIOR: MERLINS ARE FIERCE, ENERGETIC PREDATORS THAT PATROL SHORELINES AND OPEN AREAS LOOKING FOR THEIR PREY OF SMALL BIRDS (AND SOMETIMES DRAGONFLIES). THEY ALSO SPEND LONG PERIODS PERCHED IN OPEN AREAS, SCANNING FOR PREY.

RANDOM FACTS: MERLINS DON'T BUILD THEIR OWN NESTS. INSTEAD, THEY TAKE OVER THE OLD NESTS OF OTHER RAPTORS OR CROWS. THEY ALSO USE MAGPIE NESTS, SOMETIMES LAYING EGGS RIGHT ON TOP OF THE NEST'S DOME RATHER THAN INSIDE THE CAVITY.





VOICE:



PEREGRINE FALCON

FALCO PEREGRINUS

ORDER: FALCONIFORMES

FAMILY: FALCONIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 17-22" INCHES IN LENGTH: DARK-GRAY ABOVE: BLACK CAP AND MUSTACHE: WHITE UNSTREAKED THROAT WITH BARRING ON BREAST AND TAIL

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: SHORELINES

HABITAT: LOOK FOR PEREGRINE FALCONS PERCHING OR NESTING ON SKYSCRAPERS, WATER TOWERS, CLIFFS, AND OTHER TALL STRUCTURES. IF A MUDFLAT FULL OF SHOREBIRDS AND DUCKS SUDDENLY ERUPTS FROM THE GROUND, SCAN THE SKIES. A PEREGRINE IS PROBABLY IN THE AREA. .

BEHAVIOR: CATCH MEDIUM-SIZED BIRDS IN THE AIR WITH SWIFT, SPECTACULAR DIVES, CALLED STOOPS. IN CITIES THEY ARE MASTERFUL AT CATCHING PIGEONS. ELSEWHERE THEY FEED ESPECIALLY ON SHOREBIRDS AND DUCKS.

RANDOM FACTS: THE PEREGRINE FALCON IS A VERY FAST FLIER. DURING ITS SPECTACULAR HUNTING STOOP FROM HEIGHTS OF OVER 1 KM (0.62 MI), THE PEREGRINE MAY REACH SPEEDS OF 320 KM/H (200 MPH) AS IT DROPS TOWARD ITS PREY.





VOICE:



BARN OWL

TYTO ALBA

ORDER: STRIGIFORMES

FAMILY: TYTONIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 16-20" INCHES IN LENGTH: WHITE, HEART-SHAPED FACE WITH DARK-BROWN EYES: GOLDEN-BROWN ABOVE, WHITISH BELOW

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: GRASSLANDS

HABITAT: BARN OWLS REQUIRE LARGE AREAS OF OPEN LAND OVER WHICH TO HUNT. THIS CAN EITHER BE MARSH, GRASSLANDS, OR MIXED AGRICULTURAL FIELDS. FOR NESTING AND ROOSTING, THEY PREFER QUIET CAVITIES, EITHER IN TREES OR MAN-MADE STRUCTURES SUCH AS BARN OR SILOS.

BEHAVIOR: BARN OWLS NEST AND ROOST IN CAVITIES, ABANDONED BARN AND OTHER BUILDINGS, AND DENSE TREES. AT NIGHT, BARN OWLS HUNT BY FLYING LOW, BACK AND FORTH OVER OPEN HABITATS, SEARCHING FOR SMALL RODENTS PRIMARILY BY SOUND.

RANDOM FACTS: BARN OWLS SWALLOW THEIR PREY WHOLE—SKIN, BONES, AND ALL. ABOUT TWICE A DAY, THEY COUGH UP PELLETS INSTEAD OF PASSING ALL THAT MATERIAL THROUGH THEIR DIGESTIVE TRACTS.





VOICE:



TURKEY VULTURE

CATHARTES AURA

ORDER: CATHARTIFORMES

FAMILY: CATHARTIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 26-32" INCHES IN LENGTH: SMALL UNFEATHERED, PINKISH-RED HEAD: BROWN-BLACK OVERALL: WHITISH UNDERWINGS

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: OPEN WOODLANDS

HABITAT: COMMON AROUND OPEN AREAS SUCH AS ROADSIDES, SUBURBS, FARM FIELDS, COUNTRYSIDE, AND FOOD SOURCES SUCH AS LANDFILLS, TRASH HEAPS, AND CONSTRUCTION SITES.

BEHAVIOR: TURKEY VULTURES ARE MAJESTIC BUT UNSTEADY SOARERS. THEIR TEETERING FLIGHT WITH VERY FEW WINGBEATS IS CHARACTERISTIC. LOOK FOR THEM GLIDING RELATIVELY LOW TO THE GROUND, SNIFFING FOR CARRION, OR ELSE RIDING THERMALS UP TO HIGHER VANTAGE POINTS.

RANDOM FACTS: TURKEY VULTURES ARE THE ONLY SCAVENGER BIRDS THAT CAN'T KILL THEIR PREY. A CLOSE INSPECTION OF THEIR FEET REMINDS ONE OF A CHICKEN INSTEAD OF A HAWK OR AN EAGLE. THEIR FEET ARE USELESS FOR RIPPING INTO PREY, BUT THE VULTURES HAVE POWERFUL BEAKS THAT CAN TEAR THROUGH EVEN THE TOUGHEST COW HIDE.





A photograph of a shorebird, possibly a sandpiper or similar species, captured in mid-flight over a body of water. The bird is shown from a side profile, with its wings spread and its long legs trailing behind. The water below is calm, creating a clear reflection of the bird. The background is a soft, light blue sky. The text is overlaid on the image in white, bold, sans-serif font.

BIRDS: PICTURED AND DESCRIBED

SHOREBIRDS

CHARADRIFORMES OR "SHOREBIRDS", INCLUDE THE WORLD'S 214 SPECIES OF SHOREBIRDS SUCH AS GULLS, TERNS, AND PUFFINS. IN SAN FRANCISCO ALONE, WE SEE UP TO 38 SPECIES AND ROUGHLY 18 OF THOSE 38 SPECIES CAN BE SEEN FREQUENTLY ALONG THE COAST. MOST OF THESE BIRDS EXHIBIT INCREDIBLE CHANGES IN PLUMAGE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR AS THEY TRANSITION FROM JUVENILES TO MATURE ADULTS ENTERING MATING SEASON.

VOICE:



SPOTTED SANDPIPER

ACTITIS MACULARIUS

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: SCOLOPACIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 7-8" INCHES IN LENGTH: BOLD DARK SPOTS ON WHITE BREAST: ORANGE BILL: DARK BROWN BACK. IN WINTER BREAST IS PLAIN WHITE, BACK IS GRAYISH BROWN AND THE BILL IS PALE YELLOW.

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: SHORELINES

HABITAT: NEARLY ANYWHERE NEAR WATER—ALONG STREAMBANKS, RIVERS, PONDS, LAKES, AND BEACHES, PARTICULARLY ON ROCKY SHORES. THIS SPECIES IS ONE OF THE MOST WIDESPREAD BREEDING SHOREBIRDS IN THE UNITED STATES AND IS COMMONLY SEEN NEAR FRESHWATER, EVEN IN OTHERWISE ARID OR FORESTED REGIONS.

BEHAVIOR: OFTEN SOLITARY AND WALK WITH A DISTINCTIVE TEETER, BOBBING THEIR TAILS UP AND DOWN CONSTANTLY.

RANDOM FACTS: THE MALE TAKES THE PRIMARY ROLE IN PARENTAL CARE, INCUBATING THE EGGS AND TAKING CARE OF THE YOUNG. ONE FEMALE MAY LAY EGGS FOR UP TO FOUR DIFFERENT MALES AT A TIME.





VOICE:



WILLET

TRINGA SEMIPALMATA

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: SCOLOPACIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 15-17" INCHES IN LENGTH: BROWN-GRAY ABOVE, WHITISH BELOW; STRIKING BLACK AND WHITE WING MARKINGS IN FLIGHT; STRAIGHT BLACK BILL.

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: SHORELINES

HABITAT: IN WINTER, WILLETS FEED ON BEACHES AND ROCKY COASTS, AS WELL AS MUDFLATS AND MARSHES. DURING BREEDING SEASON THE WESTERN POPULATION MOVES FAR INLAND TO NEST IN GRASSLANDS AND PRAIRIES NEAR FRESHWATER.

BEHAVIOR: OFTEN SEEN ALONE. PROBE FOR CRABS, WORMS AND OTHER PREY IN SAND AND MUDFLATS, OR TO PICK AT INSECTS AND MOLLUSKS. WHEN STARTLED, THEY REACT WITH A PIERCING CALL, OFTEN OPENING THEIR WINGS AND RUNNING RATHER THAN TAKING FLIGHT.

RANDOM FACTS: BECAUSE THEY FIND PREY USING THE SENSITIVE TIPS OF THEIR BILLS, AND NOT JUST EYESIGHT, WILLETS CAN FEED BOTH DURING THE DAY AND AT NIGHT.





VOICE:



GREATER YELLOWLEGS

TRINGA MELANOLEUCA

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: SCOLOPACIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 12-14" INCHES IN LENGTH: MOTTLED BLACK AND WHITE ABOVE: LONG BILL, WHITE BELOW, WHITE RUMP, LONG BRIGHT YELLOW LEGS

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: MARSHES

HABITAT: OCCURS IN A WIDE VARIETY OF WETLAND HABITATS FROM TIDAL FLATS TO SEWAGE PONDS TO FLOODED FIELDS. THEY ARE ABLE TO USE WETLANDS WITH TALLER VEGETATION OWING TO THEIR LARGER SIZE.

BEHAVIOR: DISTINCTIVE HIGH-STEPPING GAIT, OCCASIONALLY BREAKING INTO A RUN TO CHASE AQUATIC PREY. FLIGHT IS STRONG AND SWIFT, WITH LEGS EXTENDING WELL BEYOND THE TAIL, OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY ITS STRIDENT CHIRPY CALL.

RANDOM FACTS: COLLOQUIAL NAMES FOR THIS SPECIES INCLUDE TELLTALE, TATTLER, AND YELPER, ALL OF WHICH REFER TO ITS STRIDENT ALARM CALLS.





VOICE:



LONG - BILLED CURLEW

NUMENIUS AMERICANUS

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: SCOLOPACIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 18-21" INCHES IN LENGTH: CINNAMON-BROWN ABOVE: UNSTREAKED CROWN: VERY LONG DOWNCURVED BILL

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: GRASSLANDS

HABITAT: BREEDS IN AREAS WITH SPARSE, SHORT GRASSES, INCLUDING SHORTGRASS AND MIXED-GRASS PRAIRIES AS WELL AS AGRICULTURAL FIELDS. OUTSIDE OF THE BREEDING SEASON, FOUND IN WETLANDS, TIDAL ESTUARIES, MUDFLATS, FLOODED FIELDS LESS THAN 6 INCHES DEEP, AND BEACHES.

BEHAVIOR: FORAGES FOR EARTHWORMS AND OTHER DEEP-BURROWING PREY SUCH AS SHRIMP AND CRABS IN SOFT MUDDY SUBSTRATES USING ITS LONG, CURVED BILL. ON DRIER GRASSLAND HABITATS, PECKS AT INSECTS. WALKS WITH A STRUT, PUSHING ITS HEAD FORWARD WITH JERKY STEPS.

RANDOM FACTS: THE LONG-BILLED CURLEW'S GENUS NAME, NUMENIUS, MEANS "OF THE NEW MOON," AND DESCRIBES THE SLENDER, CURVED SHAPE OF THE BIRD'S BILL.





VOICE:



WHIMBREL

NUMENIUS PHAEOPUS

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: SCOLOPACIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 15-17" INCHES IN LENGTH: WHITE STRIPES ACROSS FACE: GRAYISH-BROWN ABOVE, WHITE BELOW: LONG DOWNCURVED DARK-BILL, GRAY LEGS

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER: SHORELINES

HABITAT: ARCTIC TUNDRA DURING THE NESTING SEASON: SALTMARSHES, MUDFLATS, BEACHES, SMALL ISLANDS DURING MIGRATION AND WINTER. THEY ARE SOMETIMES FOUND INLAND AFTER BEING GROUNDED BY STORMS.

BEHAVIOR: PROBE WITH THEIR LONG BILLS INTO MUDFLATS OR WET SAND FOR INVERTEBRATES SUCH AS CRABS, WALKING SLOWLY THROUGH AREAS WHERE WATER IS VERY SHALLOW.

RANDOM FACTS: SOME MIGRATING WHIMBRELS MAKE A NONSTOP OVERWATER FLIGHT OF 4,000 KM (2,500 MILES) FROM SOUTHERN CANADA OR NEW ENGLAND TO SOUTH AMERICA.





VOICE:



MARbled GODWIT

LIMOSA FEDOA

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: SCOLOPACIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 16-18" INCHES IN LENGTH: MARbled ABOVE: CINNAMON WING LININGS, SLIGHTLY UPTURNED BILL, RINGED TAIL, LONG BLACK LEGS WITH BLuish FEET

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: MARSHES

HABITAT: BREDS IN SHORTGRASS PRAIRIES NEAR WETLANDS. DURING MIGRATION AND ON THE WINTERING GROUNDS, FOUND ON MUDFLATS, SALT PONDS, BEACHES, ESTUARIES, AND WETLANDS.

BEHAVIOR: PROBES INTO SAND OR MUD WITH ITS LONG BILL FOR AQUATIC INVERTEBRATES. SOMETIMES WALKS WHILE PROBING OR TAKES A FEW STEPS BEFORE BURYING ITS BILL INTO THE MUD.

RANDOM FACTS: UNLIKE MOST SHOREBIRDS THAT EAT AQUATIC INVERTEBRATES YEAR-ROUND, MARbled GODWITS FORAGE ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON PLANT TUBERS DURING MIGRATION, USING THEIR UPTURNED BILL TO CLIP TUBERS.





VOICE:



DUNLIN

CALIDRUS ALPINA

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES
FAMILY: SCOLOPACIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 8-9" INCHES IN LENGTH: DARK ABOVE, WHITE BELOW: SLIGHTLY DOWNCURVED BILL, BLACK LEGS AND BLACK FEET

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: SHORELINES

HABITAT: BREEDS IN WET TUNDRA, OFTEN IN AREAS WITH MANY SMALL PONDS. WINTERS IN COASTAL ESTUARIES AND LAGOONS. MIGRANTS TURN UP IN MANY WETLAND ENVIRONMENTS WITH MUDDY EDGES AS WELL AS SOD FARMS, WET AGRICULTURAL FIELDS, AND SEWAGE PONDS.

BEHAVIOR: FORAGES BY PICKING AND PROBING IN MUD, WALKING SLOWLY, USUALLY IN LARGE FLOCKS. BREEDING MALES DISPLAY OVER TERRITORIES WITH FLUTTERING, GLIDING FLIGHTS AND GIVE UNUSUAL TRILLING SONGS.

RANDOM FACTS: THE NAME DUNLIN COMES FROM DUNLING, THE EARLIEST KNOWN ENGLISH NAME OF THE SPECIES, WHICH DATES BACK AT LEAST AS FAR AS 1531. DUNLING IS A COMPOUND OF THE ENGLISH WORD DUN (MEANING GRAY-BROWN) AND THE DIMINUTIVE -LING. SO THE NAME DUNLIN ESSENTIALLY MEANS "LITTLE BROWN JOB."





VOICE:



SHORT - BILLED DOWITCHER

LIMNODROMUS GRISEUS

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: SCOLOPACIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 9-12" INCHES IN LENGTH: BROWN, BLACK, AND GOLD ABOVE: PALE ORANGE WITH DARKER SPECKLING BELOW

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: MARSHES

HABITAT: BREEDS IN BOREAL WETLANDS NEAR TREELINE. WINTERS LARGELY IN SALTWATER ESTUARIES AND LAGOONS. MIGRATING BIRDS UTILIZE ALMOST ANY FRESHWATER OR SALTWATER WETLAND WITH SHALLOW WATER, AS WELL AS FLOODED AGRICULTURAL FIELDS AND SEWAGE PONDS.

BEHAVIOR: FEED MOST HEAVILY DURING FALLING AND RISING TIDES, RAPIDLY PROBING MUDFLATS WITH THEIR LONG BILLS IN A SEWING-MACHINELIKE MOTION. DURING HIGHEST AND LOWEST TIDES, THEY REST AND PREEN IN FLOCKS.

RANDOM FACTS: DESPITE THE ABUNDANCE OF DOWITCHERS OVER MUCH OF THE CONTINENT, IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE 1930S THAT SCIENTISTS BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE WERE TWO SPECIES OF DOWITCHERS IN NORTH AMERICA.





VOICE:



KILLDEER

CHARADRIUS VOCIFERUS

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES
FAMILY: CHARADRIIDAE

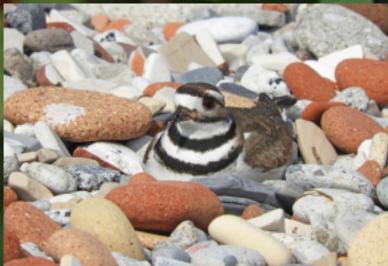
SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 10-11" INCHES IN LENGTH: GRAY-BROWN ABOVE, RUFOUS LOWER BACK AND TAIL BASE: TWO BROAD BLACK BANDS ACROSS CHEST: WHITE WING STRIPE

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: GRASSLANDS

HABITAT: LOOK FOR KILLDEER ON OPEN GROUND WITH LOW VEGETATION AS WELL AS PASTURES, FIELDS, SANDBARS AND MUDFLATS. THIS SPECIES IS ONE OF THE LEAST WATER-ASSOCIATED OF ALL SHOREBIRDS.

BEHAVIOR: SPEND TIME WALKING ALONG THE GROUND OR RUNNING AHEAD A FEW STEPS, STOPPING TO LOOK AROUND, AND RUNNING ON AGAIN.

RANDOM FACTS: MATED PAIRS PICK OUT A NESTING SITE THROUGH A RITUAL KNOWN AS A SCRAPE CEREMONY. THE MALE LOWERS HIS BREAST TO THE GROUND AND SCRAPES A SHALLOW DEPRESSION WITH HIS FEET. THE FEMALE THEN APPROACHES, HEAD LOWERED, AND TAKES HIS PLACE. THE MALE THEN STANDS WITH BODY TILTED SLIGHTLY FORWARD, TAIL RAISED AND SPREAD, CALLING RAPIDLY. MATING OFTEN FOLLOWS.





VOICE:



SEMIPALMATED PLOVER

CHARADRIUS SEMIPALMATUS

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: CHARADRIIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 6-8" INCHES IN LENGTH: BROWN ABOVE, WHITE BELOW, ONE BLACK BAND ON THE BREAST: BLACK AROUND EYE, WITH WHITE MARKS ABOVE EYE AND BILL AND A WHITE BAND ABOVE THE BLACK COLLAR: THE SHORT ORANGE BILL HAS A BLACK TIP.

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: SHORELINES

HABITAT: NESTS IN ARCTIC TUNDRA. FORAGES IN MUDFLATS, AGRICULTURAL FIELDS, RIVER MARGINS, SEWAGE PONDS, AND LAKESHORES. ROOSTS IN MARSHES OR ON BEACHES.

BEHAVIOR: VISUAL HUNTERS. THEY RUN A FEW STEPS, PAUSE, AND THEN LUNGE AT PREY ON THE GROUND, GRABBING SMALLER PREY OR PULLING AT WORMS MUCH AS ROBINS DO.

RANDOM FACTS: GIVEN THEIR REMOTE ARCTIC BREEDING RANGE, IT'S SURPRISING THAT SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS SOMETIMES NEST IN BUSY, BUILT-UP AREAS. THEY ALSO NEST AT TIMES ON ACTIVE GRAVEL RUNWAYS.





VOICE:



BLACK TURNSTONE

ARENARIA MELANOCEPHALA

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: SCOLOPACIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 8-9" INCHES IN LENGTH: BLACK HEAD, BREAST AND BACK: WHITE EYEBROW AND WHITE BELOW: REDDISH BROWN LEGS

BEST SEEN: FALL, WINTER, SPRING: SHORELINES

HABITAT: NESTS IN COASTAL SEDGE MEADOWS IN THE ARCTIC, OFTEN ON LITTLE ISLANDS IN PONDS OR RIVERS NEAR THE COAST. OUTSIDE BREEDING SEASON, FORAGES ALONG ROCKY PACIFIC COASTLINES (INCLUDING JETTIES AND BREAKWATERS) AND ADJACENT BEACHES OR FLATS.

BEHAVIOR: FLIPS OVER SMALL OBJECTS ON ROCKS AND BEACHES TO FIND SMALL PREY. SOMETIMES FORAGES ON BEACHES RACING AWAY FROM INCOMING WAVES, THEN RUNNING BACK TO EXTRACT PREY FROM WET SAND AS WATER RECEDES.

RANDOM FACTS: TO INCREASE LEVERAGE WHEN OVERTURNING HEAVY OBJECTS LIKE KELP OR DRIFTWOOD, BLACK TURNSTONES CROUCH DOWN ON THEIR LOWER LEGS TO THRUST THE OBJECT UPWARD WITH MORE FORCE. THEY SOMETIMES USE THE ENTIRE BODY TO "SNOWPLOW" HEADLONG INTO A HEAVY MASS OF KELP, EXPOSING BRINE FLIES, FISH EGGS, AND OTHER FOOD.





VOICE:



AMERICAN AVOCET

RECURVIROSTRA AMERICANA

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: RECURVIROSTRIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 16-18" INCHES IN LENGTH: BLACK AND WHITE PATTERN ON BACK AND WINGS: WHITE BELOW, LONG SLENDER UPCURVED BILL, LONG BLUISH LEGS, WEBBED FEET

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: MARSHES

HABITAT: FOUND IN WETLANDS INCLUDING SHALLOW FRESH AND SALTWATER WETLANDS, SALT PONDS. FORAGES IN OPEN WATER LESS THAN 8 INCHES DEEP. DURING WINTER USES INTERTIDAL MUDFLATS, TIDAL LAGOONS, BRACKISH IMPOUNDMENTS, SEWAGE PONDS, AND FLOODED PASTURES.

BEHAVIOR: WADES THROUGH SHALLOW WATER SWEEPING ITS BILL SIDE TO SIDE FOR AQUATIC INVERTEBRATES. OFTEN SHAKES ITS FOOT WITH EACH STEP TO REMOVE MUD FROM ITS FOOT.

RANDOM FACTS: AMERICAN AVOCET CHICKS LEAVE THE NEST WITHIN 24 HOURS OF HATCHING. DAY-OLD AVOCETS CAN WALK, SWIM, AND EVEN DIVE TO ESCAPE PREDATORS.





VOICE:



BLACK - NECKED STILT

HIMANTOPUS MEXICANUS

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: RECURVIROSTRIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 14-16" INCHES IN LENGTH: BLACK ABOVE, WHITE BELOW: SLENDER BODY, LONG PINKISH LEGS: LONG STRAIGHT NEEDLE-POINTED BILL

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: MARSHES

HABITAT: BLACK-NECKED STILTS ARE ALMOST ALWAYS SEEN NEAR SHALLOW WATER, INCLUDING BOTH SALT AND FRESH WATER, ESPECIALLY MUDFLATS, SALT PANS, SALTMARSHES, AND MANY HUMAN-MODIFIED HABITATS SUCH AS SEWAGE PONDS, EVAPORATION POOLS, AND FLOODED FIELDS.

BEHAVIOR: BLACK-NECKED STILTS WADE INTO SHALLOW BODIES OF WATER, SELDOM SWIMMING, IN PURSUIT OF TINY AQUATIC INVERTEBRATES. ADULTS DEFENDING NESTS OR CHICKS FLY AROUND AND CALL LOUDLY, SOMETIMES PERFORMING A DISTRACTION DISPLAY BY FEIGNING INJURY.

RANDOM FACTS: FIVE SPECIES OF RATHER SIMILAR-LOOKING STILTS ARE RECOGNIZED IN THE GENUS HIMANTOPUS. THEY HAVE THE SECOND-LONGEST LEGS IN PROPORTION TO THEIR BODIES OF ANY BIRD, EXCEEDED ONLY BY FLAMINGOS.





VOICE:



BLACK OYSTERCATCHER

HAEMATOPUS BACHMANI

ORDER: CHARADRIIFORMES

FAMILY: HAEMATOPODIDAE

SIZE, SHAPE, AND COLOR: 16-19" INCHES IN LENGTH: BLACKISH BODY: ORANGE-RED BILL AND YELLOW EYE RINGED WITH RED: WINGS, TAIL, AND BACK ARE DARK BROWN: JUVENILES ARE BROWNISH OVERALL

BEST SEEN: YEAR-ROUND: SHORELINE

HABITAT: NESTS ON ISLANDS, HEADLANDS, AND BEACHES. FORAGES IN ADJACENT ROCKY SHORELINES AND TIDEPOOLS, SOMETIMES ON OPEN TIDAL FLATS, RARELY IN GRASSY AREAS.

BEHAVIOR: FORAGES ON SHELLFISH USING ITS HEAVY BILL. RESTS AND PREENS, OFTEN IN ROOSTS OF A DOZEN OR MORE, DURING HIGH TIDE. QUITE VOCAL YEAR-ROUND BUT ESPECIALLY WHEN BREEDING, WHEN DUETTING ADULTS PERFORM DISPLAY FLIGHTS IN TANDEM.

RANDOM FACTS: JOHN JAMES AUDUBON WROTE THE FIRST SCIENTIFIC DESCRIPTION OF BLACK OYSTERCATCHER. THE GENUS NAME HAEMATOPUS DERIVES FROM THE GREEK FOR "BLOOD-FOOTED," A REFERENCE TO ITS PINKISH FEET.



