

Pocket Guide to Northern Prairie Birds



Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Key to the Range Maps

Maps in this guide are color-coded to indicate where each bird species may be found during different times of the year:



*Cover photo of male Chestnut-collared Longspur
courtesy of Rick Bohn at USFWS Mountain
Prairie.*

*Back cover photo of Greater Prairie-Chicken
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Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

The mission of *Bird Conservancy of the Rockies* is to conserve birds and their habitats through science, education and land stewardship.

Please consider supporting our bird conservation efforts by becoming a member. Visit us online at www.birdconservancy.org

If you are interested in learning more about the birds using your land or habitat conservation opportunities, please visit our website and click on the links for Stewardship.



Acknowledgments

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Purpose of this Pocket Guide

This guide provides an introduction to the common and unique bird species found in the prairies of the northern Great Plains. The geographical area covered by this guide includes western Minnesota, the Dakotas, eastern Montana and Wyoming, and southern Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. Prairie grassland is the predominant habitat type but the region also has rivers, shallow wetlands, shrublands, homesteads, and shelterbelts. All of these areas are important for migrating, wintering, and nesting birds. Thus this guide includes more than 80 species which occur in the northern Great Plains at some point during the year. More extensive information, including descriptions of these birds in different seasons and information about other prairie species, can be found in bird field guides available at most bookstores.

Northern Great Plains Prairie Birds

Together, shortgrass, mixed-grass, and tallgrass prairies cover about one-fifth of North America. Vegetation in the Great Plains, the westernmost region of North America's grassland, is affected by pronounced wet-dry climate cycles, grazing, and

fire. These forces create a patchwork of vegetation in a variety of growth stages and conditions that have supported a diverse and highly specialized group of birds.

Eleven bird species are restricted to the Great Plains, and 35 others are closely linked with it. These 46 species are a small fraction of the approximately 650 bird species that breed in North America north of Mexico. Such a small group of birds is easily overlooked, especially in comparison with the more numerous and colorful forest species. As a result, population declines among prairie bird species have been largely overlooked until recently. Grassland birds are now arguably the highest conservation priority—they have shown the steepest population declines of any group of North American birds. These declines can be attributed to the loss of high-quality habitat resulting from the conversion and fragmentation of native prairie by agriculture, urban development, and suppression of naturally occurring fire.

Many grassland birds are still around because of a long tradition of careful and effective land

management. With so much grassland habitat in private ownership, landowners play a pivotal role in prairie bird conservation. Different grassland birds require management for different vegetation structure. Careful stewardship includes maintaining healthy, diverse ecosystems upon which livestock, wildlife, and humans depend.

Species Accounts

Not all bird species found in the northern Great Plains are included in this guide. Instead, the guide focuses on commonly seen birds or iconic prairie species, especially those found in grasslands and wetlands. Species are organized according to their relationships to each other; e.g., hawks are grouped together, shorebirds are together, etc. Each species account has the following sections:

Identification: Description of adult birds in breeding or wintering season plumage. Differences between the sexes are also noted. Measurement is length of the bird from bill tip to tail tip, unless otherwise noted.

Habitat: Primary habitat(s) the species uses for nesting, feeding, or roosting.

Feeding: How the bird searches for food, as well as diet. Explanations of Diet icons are inside the back cover.

Conservation: Population trend over the past 20 years. Suggested actions you can take to conserve the species.

Map: *General* guide to a species' distribution throughout the year. Because birds are mobile, the species may occur outside the depicted range. A key to map colors is inside the front cover.



SPECIES ACCOUNTS



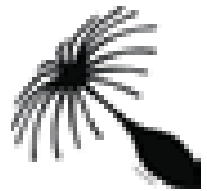
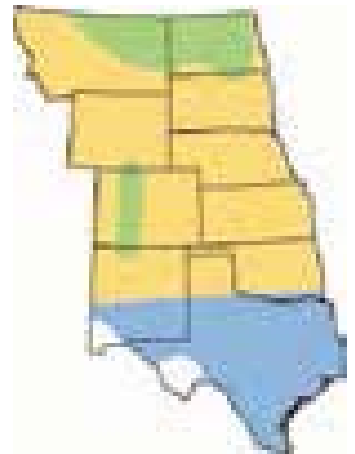
Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

Identification: 25-43". Black head and neck, white chin strap, white rump, black tail, and brown body. Extremely variable in size. Local breeding birds belong to the 'Giant' race, the largest of all Canada Geese.

Habitat: Marshes, ponds, lakes, rivers, and creeks in rural and urban areas. Usually nests on the ground, near water.

Feeding: Grazes both aquatic and terrestrial vegetation and seeds; also will take larger insects, mollusks, and crustaceans.

Conservation: Increasing. Reintroduced in the late 20th century, the 'Giant' Canada Goose has become so abundant that it is considered a pest in some areas. Avoid disturbing nests.





Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*)

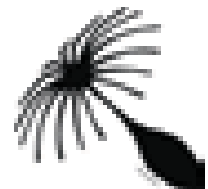
Identification: 21". Male has grayish body, brown-tan head, dark bill, black rump, and white wing patch. Female is mottled brown with yellow legs and bill, and a white wing patch.

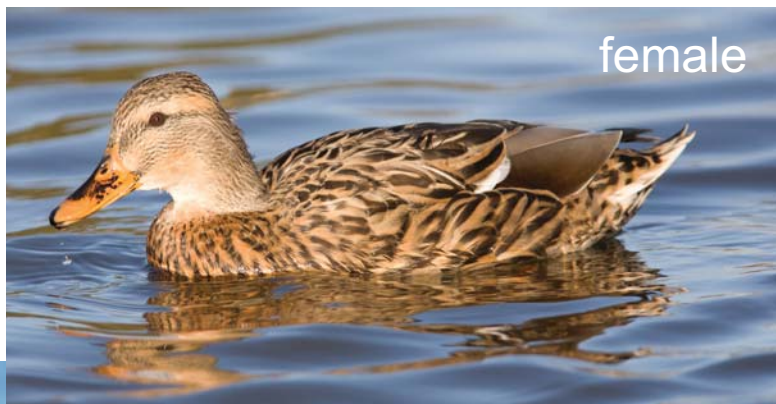
Habitat: Freshwater wetlands. Nests on the ground in upland areas near water.

Feeding: Aquatic feeder; dabbles for food on or near water surface or tip-up their body to reach deeper food items.

Conservation: Increasing. Maintain grasslands with tall cover near water. Preserve wetlands.

Delay haying of grasslands near water until mid-August. Use non-lead shot when hunting and non-lead sinkers and lures when fishing.





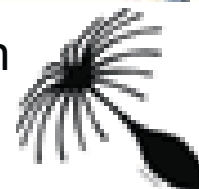
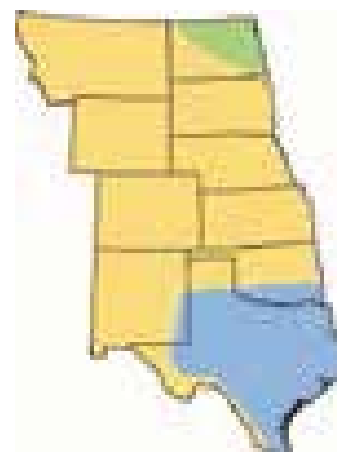
Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Identification: 24". Male has glossy green head, white ring around the neck, chestnut chest, brown back, whitish sides and belly, orange feet, yellowish bill, and blue wing patch bordered by white. Female is mottled brown with whitish tail, orange feet, and blue wing patch bordered top and bottom with white.

Habitat: All types of wetlands in both rural and urban areas. Nests on the ground near water.

Feeding: On the ground or dabbles on the water's surface. Will tip-up their body to reach food items in deeper water. Eat grain and seeds in cropland during migration and winter.

Conservation: Stable. Maintain grasslands with tall cover near water. Avoid disturbing nests. Use non-lead shot when hunting and non-lead sinkers and lures when fishing.





Blue-winged Teal (*Spatula discors*)

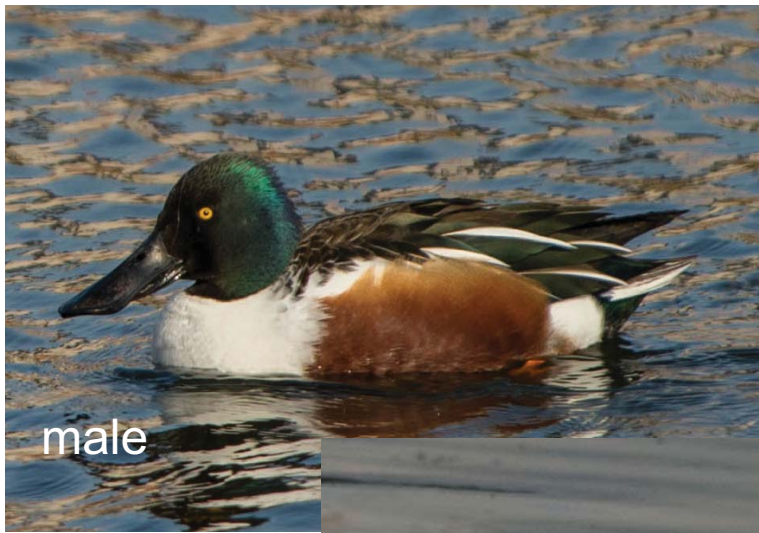
Identification: 16". Both sexes have large pale-blue wing patches. Male has distinctive white crescents on his face. Female is mottled brown.

Habitat: Ponds, marshes, and shallow edges of lakes. Nests on the ground in upland areas near water.

Feeding: Dabbles for food on or near water surface. During migration, forages grain from corn and rice fields.

Conservation: Decreasing. Maintain grasslands with tall cover near water. Preserve shallow wetlands. Delay haying of grasslands near water until mid-August. Use non-lead shot when hunting and non-lead sinkers and lures when fishing.





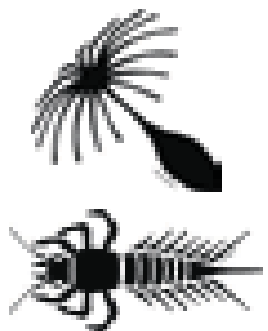
Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*)

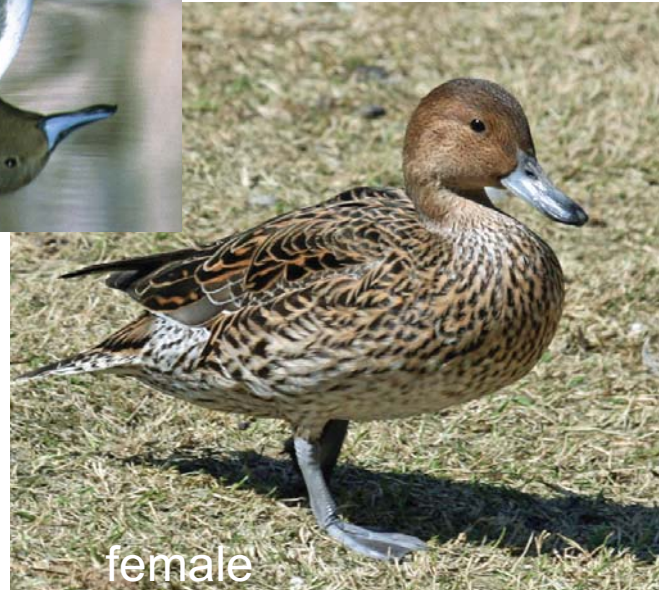
Identification: 19". Both sexes have spoon-shaped bill, large pale-blue wing patch, and orange feet. Male has glossy green head, white chest, and rufous belly and sides. Female is mottled brown.

Habitat: Ponds, marshes, and shallow edges of lakes. Nests on the ground near water.

Feeding: Aquatic surface feeder; strains plant and animal items through comb-like edge of bill.

Conservation: Increasing. Maintain grasslands with tall cover near water. Preserve potholes and ponds. Use non-lead shot when hunting and non-lead sinkers and lures when fishing.





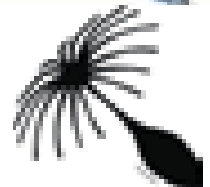
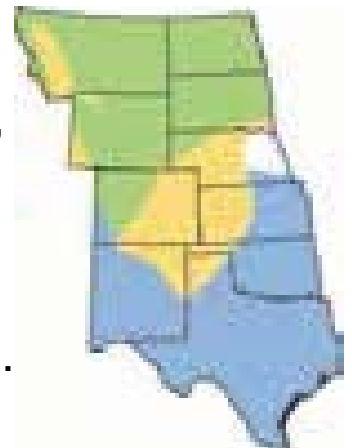
Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

Identification: 28" (male), 21" (female). Male has slender neck, long pointed tail, white chest, and white line extending onto dark brown face. Female is mottled brown with slender neck, rather pointed tail, and gray bill.

Habitat: Wetlands, especially shallow wetlands. Nests on ground in upland areas near water.

Feeding: Aquatic feeder; dabbles for food on or near water surface.

Conservation: Stable. Maintain grasslands near water. Preserve shallow wetlands. Delay haying of grasslands near water until mid-August. Use non-lead shot when hunting and non-lead sinkers and lures when fishing.





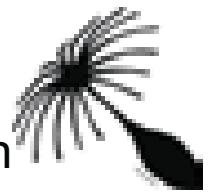
Gray Partridge (*Perdix perdix*)

Identification: 12". Introduced species from Asia. Gray-brown bird with rufous bars on the sides, dark belly patch (male), rusty face, and short rufous tail. Also called Hungarian Partridge.

Habitat: Cultivated areas with surrounding grassland or other cover. Nests on ground concealed by vegetation.

Feeding: Forages on ground for seeds, grains, and grass shoots.

Conservation: Decreasing. Maintain grasslands in the landscape. Delay haying until August. Provide winter cover.





Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

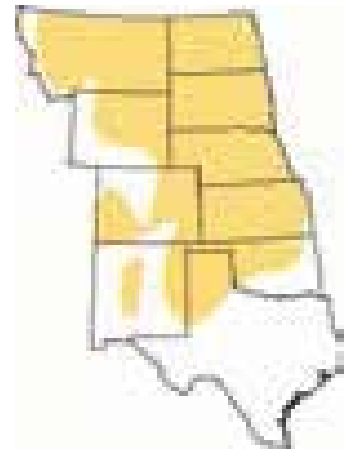
Identification: 33" (male); 23" (female).

Introduced species from Asia. Characterized by its long pointed tail. Females are brownish with dark spots and bars over much of the body. Colorful male has red face, iridescent green neck, and white or black spots on orange or rust feathers.

Habitat: Open fields with nearby brushy areas or tall thick grass. Nests on ground.

Feeding: Searches for seeds and insects on ground.

Conservation: Stable. Maintain grasslands with tall thick cover. Delay haying until August. Provide winter cover.



Doug Backlund



male

Bob Gress, BirdsInFocus.com



female

Greater Sage-Grouse

(*Centrocercus urophasianus*)

Identification: Much larger than other grouse—as large as a small turkey. Mostly brown, mottled on the back and wings, with a black belly, white breast, and pointed tail. Male (28") has black throat and white breast, female (22") has mottled brown head and breast.

Habitat: Sagebrush shrublands.

Feeding: In summer, eats insects. In winter, eats sagebrush leaves, shoots, flowers, and buds.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain extensive areas of sagebrush with understory of native grasses and forbs. Control invasive plants (such as cheatgrass) and encroaching trees. Minimize roads, habitat fragmentation, and other disturbance.





Bob Gress, BirdsInFocus.com

Sharp-tailed Grouse

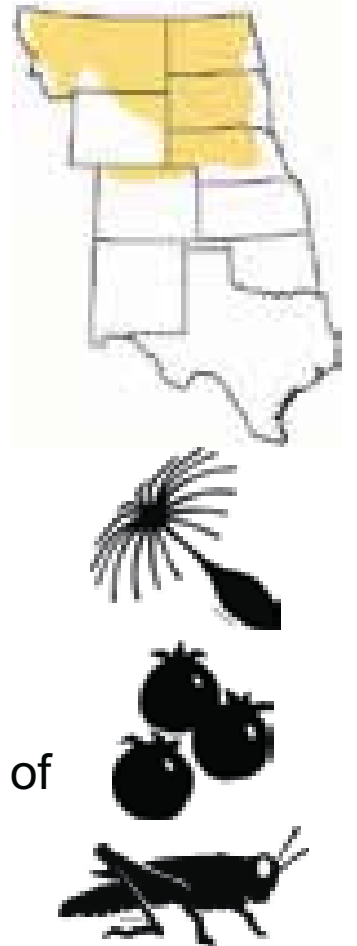
(*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)

Identification: 17". Mottled, mostly dark brown back and wings, dark brown spots on white breast and belly. Most distinctive feature is the pointed tail, a result of the central tail feathers being longer than the rest. During courtship displays, male inflates purplish air sacs on sides of his neck.

Habitat: Grasslands, shrublands.

Feeding: Collects food from the ground or low shrubs.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain large tracts of native grasslands mixed with shrublands.





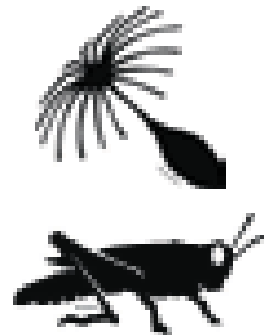
Greater Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*)

Identification: 18". Chicken-like bird with dark brown barring, yellow patches of bare skin above the eyes. During courtship displays, male expands yellowish air sacs on sides of his neck.

Habitat: Inhabits tallgrass and midgrass prairie.

Feeding: Collected on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain medium and tall grasslands. Control invasive grasses such as cheatgrass and encroaching trees and shrubs. Minimize roads, habitat fragmentation, and other disturbance.





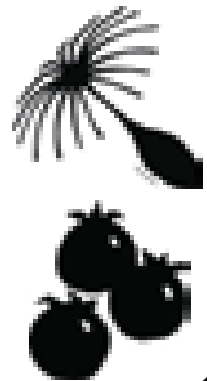
Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

Identification: 13". Much larger and heavier than Mourning Dove. Pale grayish tan body with a black line on back of the neck. When it flies, shows a broad square tail with white corners.

Habitat: Usually associated with human habitations. Nests in trees, especially in conifers.

Feeding: Feeds on seeds on the ground.

Conservation: Increasing. Originally from Eurasia and first released in Barbados, this bird has very recently spread into the northern Great Plains.





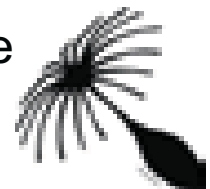
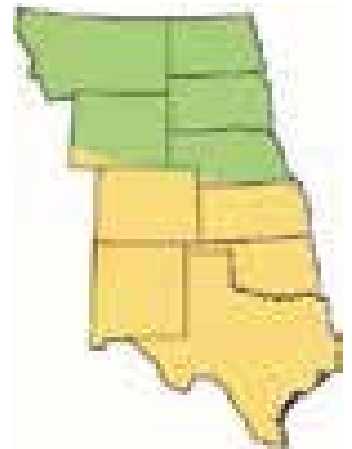
Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*)

Identification: 12". Grayish-brown overall, with black spots on the wings. Long, pointed tail. The familiar cooing song gives the bird its name—it sounds as though it is mourning.

Habitat: Widespread, from open grasslands and croplands to open woodlands. The flimsy stick nest is built in a tree or shrub, occasionally on the ground.

Feeding: Picks seeds from the ground, eats some insects.

Conservation: Stable and abundant. Minimize pesticide use. Avoid using lead shot when hunting.





Ross Lock

Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*)

Identification: 10". Grayish overall, usually seen flying at dusk or dawn but occasionally in midday; sometimes seen perched on fence posts. Wings are tapered and bent back at an angle; in flight, a white bar near the end of each wing is obvious. The wing beat is stiff and the flight erratic, like a bat.

Habitat: Open areas, woodlands, towns. Does not build a nest but lays its eggs directly on the ground, especially among gravel on hills, ridges, and even on rooftops.

Feeding: Captures insects in flight.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grasslands. Minimize pesticide use. When driving at night, try to avoid hitting nighthawks roosting on gravel roads.





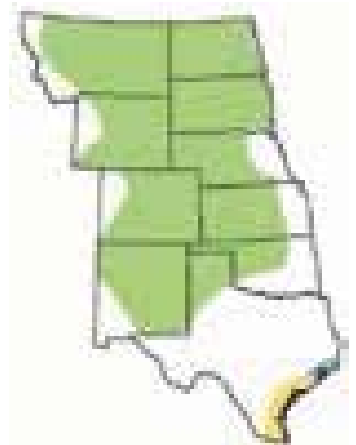
American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*)

Identification: 18". Reddish or cinnamon head and neck, white body, black back and on part of the wings, grayish legs. Long, thin, upturned bill.

Habitat: Shorelines, shallow water. Nest is a shallow depression in dried mud or sand.

Feeding: Sweeps bill back and forth through the water, capturing small aquatic insects.

Conservation: Stable overall, but declining in parts of the Great Plains. Maintain wetlands and shallow open-water areas.





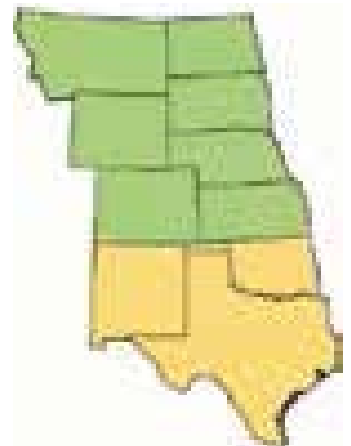
Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Identification: 10". White chin, breast, and belly contrast with two black bands, which no other North American shorebird has. Reddish-brown rump is obvious when the bird is flying or doing its broken-wing display to distract predators near the nest.

Habitat: Shorelines, other open areas with short vegetation and bare ground. Nest is a bare area scraped out in gravel, where the eggs are extremely well camouflaged.

Feeding: Picks food items from the ground.

Conservation: Stable. Minimize use of pesticides.





Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*)

Identification: 8". Pale tan back and wings, white breast and belly, a black patch above the white forehead, and a black stripe between the black bill and eye.

Habitat: Very short grasslands, freshly plowed fields, other areas with vegetation shorter than 2", areas of bare ground.

Feeding: Collects insects from the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grasslands with extensive bare ground and native herbivores such as prairie dogs. Minimize pesticide use.





Doug Backlund

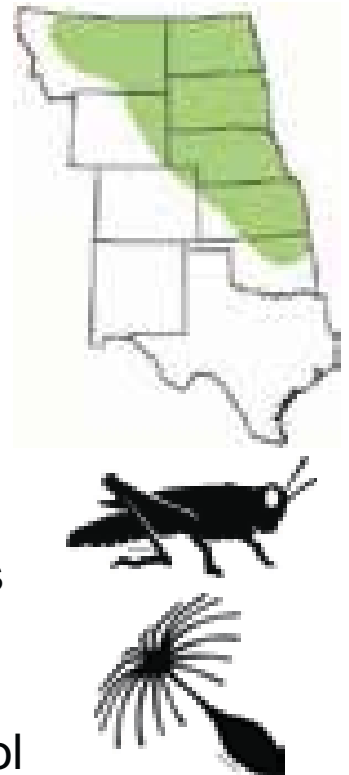
Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)

Identification: 11". Small head, thin neck, short bill, large eyes. Brown feather tips give mottled appearance. Often seen perched on fence posts.

Habitat: Grasslands. Nests on the ground, with surrounding vegetation pulled over the nest for concealment.

Feeding: Collects food items on the ground. Often forages on burned prairie.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain large tracts of open grasslands. Avoid burning, mowing, or plowing during the nesting and brood-rearing seasons (roughly mid-April to mid-July). Control encroaching trees and shrubs.





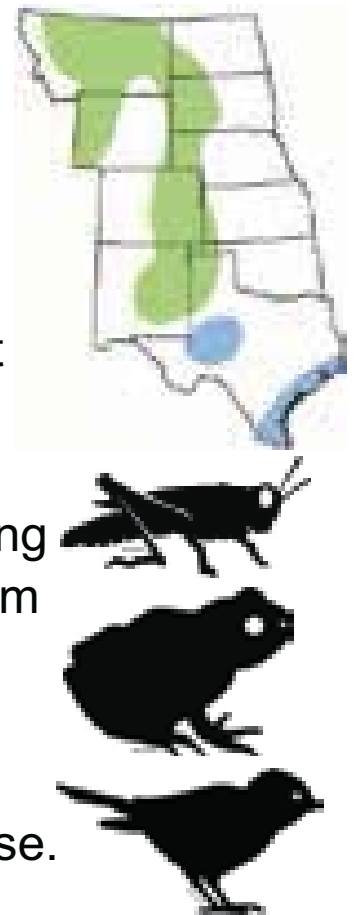
Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*)

Identification: 24". Largest North American shorebird. Extremely long (6-8" long) downcurved bill. Body and wings are colored with browns and cinnamon. The call is a loud "cur-lew" or "cur-lee".

Habitat: Grasslands with little to no forbs. Nest is a shallow hollow on the ground.

Feeding: Feeds by walking slowly, watching for large insects, toads, and bird eggs. Uses long bill to pull prey such as spiders and crickets from their underground burrows.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grasslands and prairie wetlands. Avoid activity near known nesting sites. Minimize pesticide use.





Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren, CC BY 2.0, Flickr.com

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)

Identification: 18". Brown overall; breast and belly are marked with dark barring. The slightly upturned bill is pink near the face, changing to black at the tip.

Habitat: Moist meadows and grasslands. Nest is a shallow hollow on the ground.

Feeding: Collects food items from the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain wetlands and large tracts of grassland.



Lana Hays



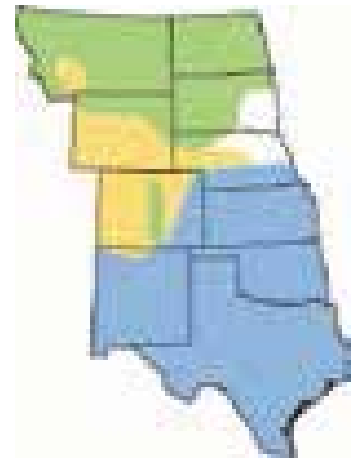
Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*)

Identification: 11". Heavy body, short legs, large head, extremely long straight bill. Dark mottled upper body with bold buff stripes on head and back, white belly, and short orange tail. Secretive and well-camouflaged in its wet grass habitat.

Habitat: Wet grass habitats including wet meadows, seeps, and shallow potholes. Nests on ground in small clump of grass under low vegetation.

Feeding: Picks up individual food items with bill as it walks along.

Conservation: Increasing. Preserve shallow wetlands. Maintain buffer of vegetation around wetlands and protect from grazing livestock. Minimize pesticide use.





Willet (*Tringa semipalmata*)

Identification: 15". When standing, drab gray mottled body with long legs, and thick straight blue-gray bill. In flight, shows bold black and white wing pattern and dark-tipped white tail.

Habitat: Wet meadows, pond edges, shallow wetlands. Nests placed in short dense vegetation near the water's edge.

Feeding: Picks up insects and crustaceans from the ground in shallow water or mud.

Conservation: Decreasing. Maintain buffer of vegetation along water's edge and protect from grazing livestock. Preserve shallow wetlands. Minimize pesticide use.





male



female

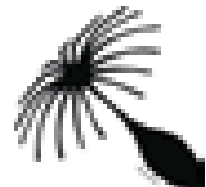
Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*)

Identification: 9". Thin straight black bill, white face, sides, and belly. Female has broad dark stripe through the eye that extends down the neck, and a gray cap; male has black cap and lacks the broad dark stripe. Contrary to most birds, the drab-colored male incubates the eggs.

Habitat: Wet meadows near lakes or ponds. The well-concealed nest is on the ground.

Feeding: Often seen spinning in circles in shallow water to stir up aquatic insects.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. Maintain wetlands and wet meadows. Defer livestock grazing until after mid-July in pastures containing wetlands.





Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*)

Identification: 14". White body, gray back, wings are white below and gray above, black head with a red bill, and white crescents above and below each eye.

Habitat: Lakes and ponds in prairie regions. Builds a floating nest, anchored to emergent vegetation such as cattails.

Feeding: Often follows farm equipment through fields to pick up worms and insects.

Conservation: Stable. Maintain marshes with open-water areas. Minimize use of pesticides.





USFWS

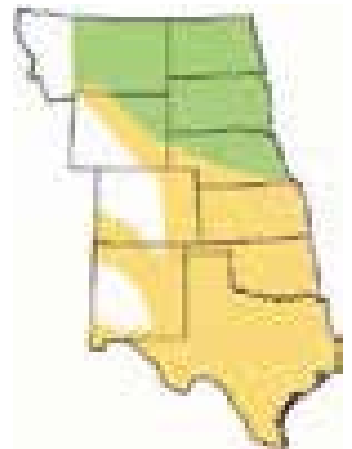
Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)

Identification: 48". North America's largest heron, with a wingspan of six feet. Blue-gray body, black stripe over the eye.

Habitat: Shorelines and shallow water. Builds a stick platform nest in trees, with many pairs nesting close together.

Feeding: Stands or walks slowly through shallow water with neck outstretched, captures prey with a quick stabbing motion of its sharp bill.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. Retain trees adjacent to water for nesting sites. Minimize use of pesticides.





David Seibel, BirdsInFocus.com

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

Identification: 26", wingspan 67". Very large black 'buzzard' with naked, small-looking red head. When flies, pale flight feathers contrasting with dark body are visible. Holds wings upward in a 'V' when soaring, often tilting back and forth in the wind.

Habitat: Both woodlands and open country. Nests in dark cavities including cliff overhangs, caves, tree stumps, vacant buildings, and even abandoned cars.

Feeding: Visual forager — soars over large areas searching for carrion.

Conservation: Increasing. Affected by poisoned bait set out for predators. Use non-lead shot for hunting. Avoid disturbing nests.



Tom Grey



male

Tom Grey



female

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

Identification: 21". In flight, male is gray above and white below, with black wing tips; female is brown above with brown streaks below. Both have a long tail with a rectangular white rump patch. Formerly known as the Marsh Hawk.

Habitat: Marshes, grasslands, other open areas. Builds a well-hidden nest of sticks and reeds, on the ground or supported on marsh vegetation.

Feeding: Often seen gliding low over the ground with its head down, scanning for prey.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grasslands and wetlands. Avoid activity near nest sites. Minimize pesticide use.





Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

Identification: 20". Typical adult has white chin and belly, contrasting with brown head and bib. The wings are white and dark brown.

Habitat: Open areas with scattered trees, shelterbelts. The large nest is usually placed high in a tree.

Feeding: Usually soars while hunting for small animals, but sometimes walks on the ground to catch grasshoppers and crickets.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grassland; retain existing trees for nesting; stay away from active nests. Minimize pesticide use.





© Dreamstime.com/
John Wollwerth

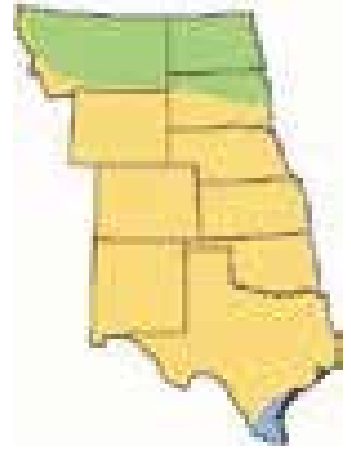
Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Identification: 22". Typical adult has reddish tail, a dark brown band across the white belly, and a dark brown patch on the front edge of each wing, close to the body.

Habitat: Open areas with trees, which are needed as support for the large nest of sticks.

Feeding: Hunts by watching from a perch or while soaring.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. Maintain open grassland; retain existing trees for nesting. Minimize pesticide use.





Tom Grey



Tom Grey

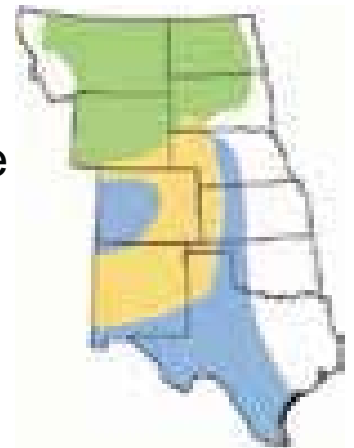
Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*)

Identification: 24". Typical adults viewed from below look almost all white; the back and other upperparts are rust-colored. The legs are rust-colored and form a sharp contrast with the white belly and tail. The tail lacks the dark bands seen on most hawks.

Habitat: Open areas. The large nest may be placed in a tree or shrub, or on the ground, and is built of sticks, bones, and grass.

Feeding: Hunts while soaring or from a perch.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. Maintain open grasslands and small mammal populations, including prairie dogs. Protect existing trees. Avoid activity near active nests. Minimize pesticide use.



Allan Claybon



Bob Gress, BirdsInFocus.com



Rough-legged Hawk

(*Buteo lagopus*)

Identification: 22". Typical bird has mostly white wings with distinctive black rectangular patches at the wrist, a dark belly, and a broad dark band at the end of the tail.

Habitat: Nests in arctic regions; spends winters in open areas of the Great Plains.

Feeding: Hunts while soaring or from a perch.

Conservation: Population fluctuates in response to fluctuations of lemming populations on the breeding grounds; overall, appears to be stable. Retain populations of small mammals.





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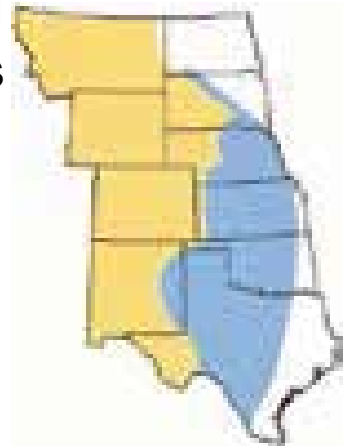
Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

Identification: 35". Adult is very dark brown all over with a golden brown head; immature birds have a white patch toward the end of each wing (visible while in flight) and at the base of the tail.

Habitat: Nests in mountainous areas or open country, spends winters in open areas. The bulky stick nest is placed on cliffs, rock outcrops, or in trees.

Feeding: Hunts primarily by soaring.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. Maintain open grasslands and rabbit, jackrabbit, and prairie dog populations. Avoid activity near active nests. Minimize pesticide use.





© iStockPhoto.com/ Cynthia Lindow

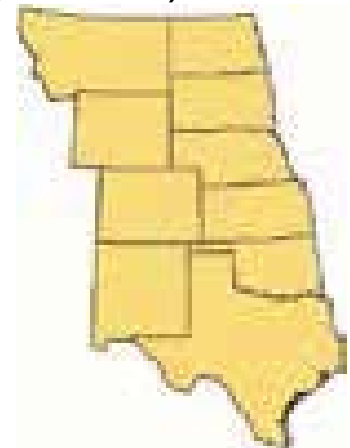
Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*)

Identification: 22". Large grayish owl with white throat, yellow eyes, and two prominent ear tufts (“horns”). Often seen perched on utility poles or trees at dusk or dawn.

Habitat: Wooded areas; typically nests in a stick nest built by crows, magpies, or hawks.

Feeding: Hunts at night for rabbits, small rodents, skunks, reptiles, and birds.

Conservation: Stable. Minimize the use of pesticides, especially those targeting rodents.





Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*)

Identification: 24". Large, all-white owl with yellow eyes and no ear tufts. Many birds have some dusky mottling.

Habitat: Arctic species; some spend the winter in the northern Great Plains. In winter, occurs in open areas including cropland, stubble, and grasslands.

Feeding: Unlike most owls, mainly hunts during the day. Patiently sits and waits for prey to come near.

Conservation: Stable. Keep stubble in croplands during winter. Minimize pesticide use.





Judd Patterson, BirdsInFocus.com

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)

Identification: 9". Unusually long legs, brown coloration with white spots on back and wings, dark brown barring on the light brown breast and belly, yellow eyes.

Habitat: Treeless areas with short vegetation (less than 4" tall), often in prairie dog towns. Raises young under ground inside old mammal burrows.

Feeding: Captures grasshoppers and other insects during the day, birds and small mammals at night.

Conservation: Population has declined significantly. Maintain open grasslands and populations of prairie dogs and other burrowing mammals. Minimize pesticide use.





Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

Identification: 15". Medium-sized owl with dark areas around the eyes, dark brown streaks on the breast, and a light belly. The short ear tufts are difficult to see.

Habitat: Open fields and marshy areas. Nests on the ground.

Feeding: Soars low over the ground to hunt for voles and other small rodents; occasionally captures songbirds.

Conservation: Declining at an alarming rate. Maintain wetlands and open grasslands. Minimize pesticide use. Remove unused fences.



Lana Hays



Red-headed Woodpecker

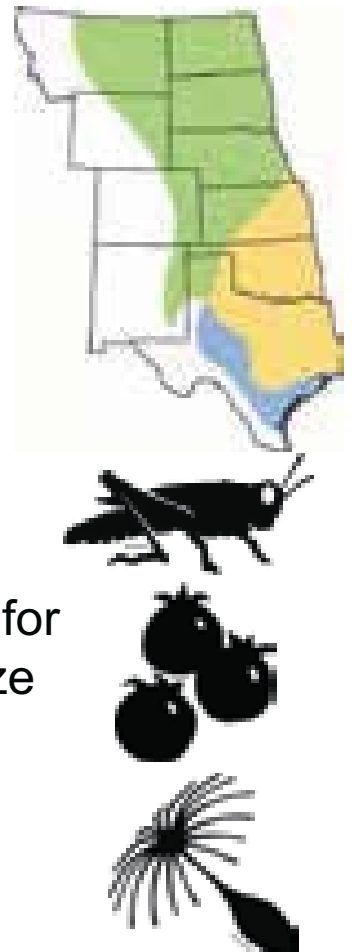
(*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*)

Identification: 9". Conspicuous all-red head, black and white body, and white wing patches.

Habitat: Shelterbelts, woodlands, edges of farmsteads, standing dead trees in the open. Nests in tree cavities that it has excavated.

Feeding: Flies out from posts to catch insects, forages on ground and in trees for acorns, nuts, and seeds. Stores acorns or nuts in tree crevices for winter feeding.

Conservation: Decreasing. Retain dead trees for nesting and foraging. Retain oak trees. Minimize pesticide use.





Doug Backlund

Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)

Identification: 13". Gray and brown head, black crescent below the throat, black spots on pale breast and belly, brown and black bars on back and wings. In flight, the underside of the wings may be yellow or reddish orange. Male has a black or red “moustache.”

Habitat: River woodlands, towns, homesteads with large trees. Nests in a tree cavity.

Feeding: Compared to other woodpeckers, spends much time on the ground, where it forages for ants and other insects; sometimes catches insects in the air.

Conservation: Declining. Preserve existing trees and snags. Minimize pesticide use.





American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)

Identification: 11". Small falcon with pointed wings and long tail. Male has blue-gray wings and a reddish-brown back; female is reddish-brown all over. Both sexes have two vertical black stripes on each side of the head.

Habitat: Open areas. Nests in tree cavities.

Feeding: Hovers by rapidly beating its wings; also hunts from perches such as trees, fences, utility poles. Because of its small size and predation on songbirds, this species was formerly known as the Sparrow Hawk.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grasslands. Preserve existing trees and snags. Minimize pesticide use.



Brian Wheeler

Doug Backlund



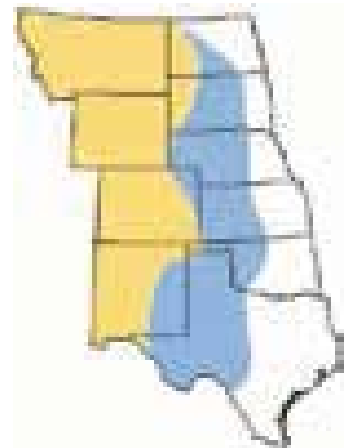
Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*)

Identification: 17". Pointed wings typical of falcons. When seen from below, wings and body are pale, contrasting with dark brown "armpits" under the wings, close to the body. A narrow, dark brown bar extends below each eye.

Habitat: Open areas. Nests on cliff ledges.

Feeding: Hunts while flying, catching birds in midair and small mammals on the ground.

Conservation: Decreasing. Maintain open grasslands and small mammal populations. Minimize pesticide use.





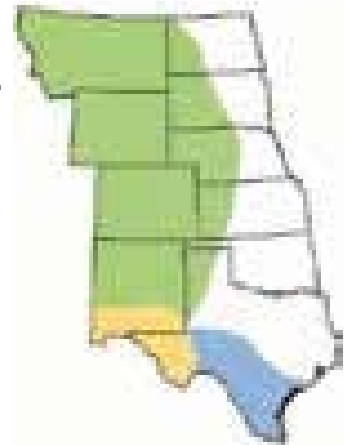
Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*)

Identification: 7". Grayish head, back, and wings, lighter breast, cinnamon belly, black tail. Frequently perches on fences, where it can be seen bobbing its tail.

Habitat: Open areas, especially where streams or ravines are present. Builds a bulky nest of plant material in rock crevices, under bridges, or in openings of buildings or streambanks.

Feeding: Flies out from a perch to capture flying insects.

Conservation: Increasing. Minimize pesticide use.





Tom Grey

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

Identification: 8". Yellow belly and black tail, light gray head and breast. The harsh call sounds like a tape recording played at a very fast speed.

Habitat: Dry, open areas, open woods, towns, homesteads. Nests in trees.

Feeding: Captures flying insects in the air.

Conservation: Declining in some areas.

Maintain existing mature trees for perching and nesting. Minimize pesticide use.





Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*)

Identification: 8". Black tail with white tip, black back, wings, and head, white chin, breast, and belly. Often seen perched on fences or wires, from which it flies out to catch flying insects, then returns to the same perch.

Habitat: Open areas, open woods, towns. Nests in trees.

Feeding: Captures flying insects in the air.

Conservation: Declining. Preserve existing trees. Minimize pesticide use.





Tom Grey

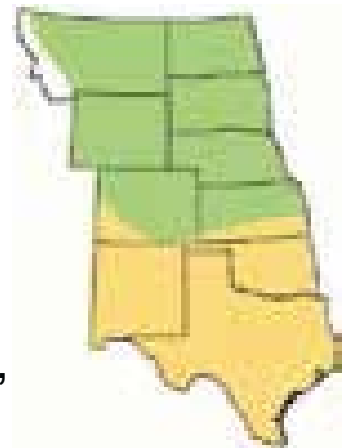
Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*)

Identification: 9". Gray body, black wings with white patches, black mask. Northern Shrikes are present on the Great Plains only in winter.

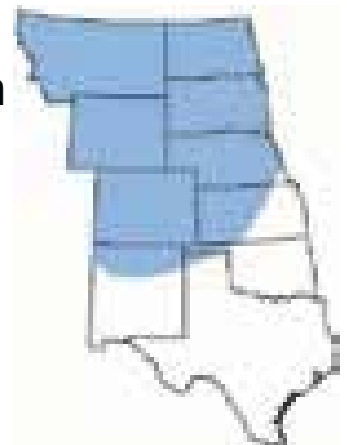
Habitat: Open areas where there are some trees or shrubs, especially ones with thorns. Nests in a tree or shrub.

Feeding: Watches from a fence or other perch, then swoops down to capture prey. Skewers prey on thorns or barbed wire.

Conservation: Loggerhead: Widespread, steep declines. Northern: Stable. Maintain open grasslands with scattered shrubs for nesting. Minimize pesticide use.



Loggerhead



Northern



Francesco Veronesi, CC BY-SA 2.0, Flickr.com



Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*)

Identification: 5". Greenish gray upperparts and whitish underparts help to camouflage this species high in the trees. Note white eyebrow stripe. Persistently sings its husky rambling song while foraging in the tree tops.

Habitat: Shelterbelts, roadside trees, and woodlands. Basket nest hangs from the fork of a twig high up in a tree.

Feeding: Picks insects from leaves and tree trunks.

Conservation: Stable. Maintain woodlands and shelterbelts. Minimize pesticide use.





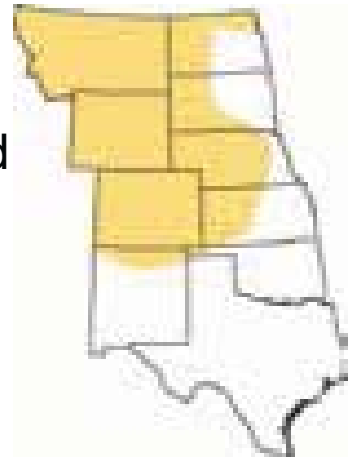
Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*)

Identification: 20" plus 11" tail. Black above and white below, black bill and legs, white patches in the glossy blue wings. Long tapered tail is an iridescent greenish black.

Habitat: Open country with scattered trees or woodlands. Bulky domed nest placed in trees. Highly social; breed together in small groups.

Feeding: Scavenger; forages on the ground for animal and plant matter as well as carrion.

Conservation: Decreasing. Affected by poisoned bait set out for predators.





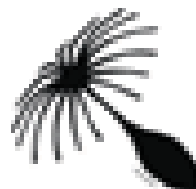
American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

Identification: 19". Completely black; purplish gloss in strong sunlight.

Habitat: Open and semi-open country. Nests in trees or shrubs.

Feeding: Forages both on the ground and in trees.

Conservation: Stable. Protect winter roost sites. Minimize pesticide and poisoned bait use.





Tom Grey

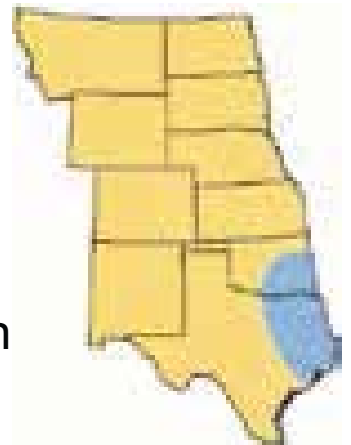
Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*)

Identification: 7". Brown back, wings, and tail, white breast and belly, bold black markings on brown and pale yellow head, black crescent under throat. Small black "horns" are often difficult to see.

Habitat: Open areas with very short vegetation and bare ground. Nests on the ground, usually adjacent to a clump of vegetation.

Feeding: Eats seeds and insects collected on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grasslands. Control encroaching shrubs and trees. Minimize pesticide use.



Bob Gress, BirdsInFocus.com



Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

Identification: 6". Male is dark greenish-blue above and clean white below. Female is brown above. Square tail has a slight notch.

Habitat: Woodlands, shelterbelts, standing dead trees out in the open. Nests in tree cavities excavated by woodpeckers and bluebird boxes.

Feeding: Catches insects on the wing. Usually forages near water.

Conservation: Increasing. Retain dead trees for nesting and perching. Minimize pesticide use.





Tom Grey



Tom Grey

Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*)

Identification: 6". Blue-black back, wings, and tail, buffy rump patch and collar, blue-black crown, reddish brown face, white belly. The prominent white forehead is distinctive. As with all swallows, the flight is fast and acrobatic.

Habitat: Open areas near water. Builds mud nests in colonies under bridges and highway overpasses and on buildings.

Feeding: Captures flying insects in the air.

Conservation: Population is increasing, but is affected by competition with the invasive non-native House Sparrow.





Robert Shantz



Glen Tepke

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

Identification: 7". Deep blue back, wings, and head, rusty throat and forehead, buffy breast and belly, distinctive long forked tail.

Habitat: Open areas near buildings.

Sometimes seen gathering mud from water's edge. Uses the mud to build a cup nest on bridges and buildings.

Feeding: Captures flying insects in the air.

Conservation: Declining. Minimize pesticide use.

Outside of nesting season, attach narrow strip of wood to walls or under eaves to help support nests.





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House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)

Identification: 5". Very active brown bird with whitish breast and belly. The short tail is often cocked upward. Song is a rapid, bubbly series of whistled notes.

Habitat: Woodlands, including river woodlands, homesteads, shelterbelts. Nests in tree cavities and bird houses.

Feeding: Eats insects captured in shrubs, trees, and on the ground.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. Preserve dead and dying trees. Minimize pesticide use.



Clint Murray



Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*)

Identification: 4". Short bill and tail; brown body, plain face, indistinct white streaks on back of the head and back, dull white underneath.

Habitat: Wet meadows, upland edges of sedge marshes. Ball-shaped nest is built near the ground in the grass. Male will build several 'dummy' nests to attract a female, which then chooses one of his nests to raise their young.

Feeding: Forages for insects in grass and on the ground.

Conservation: Increasing. Preserve shallow wetlands and wet meadows. Maintain grasslands. Minimize pesticide use.





David Kinneer

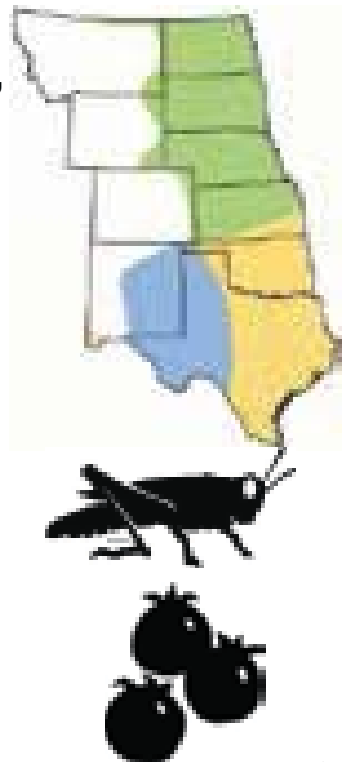
Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*)

Identification: 7". Blue back, wings, and head, reddish brown throat and breast, white belly. Male is darker.

Habitat: Open areas, open woodlands, woodland edges, homesteads, towns. Nests in tree cavities or bluebird boxes.

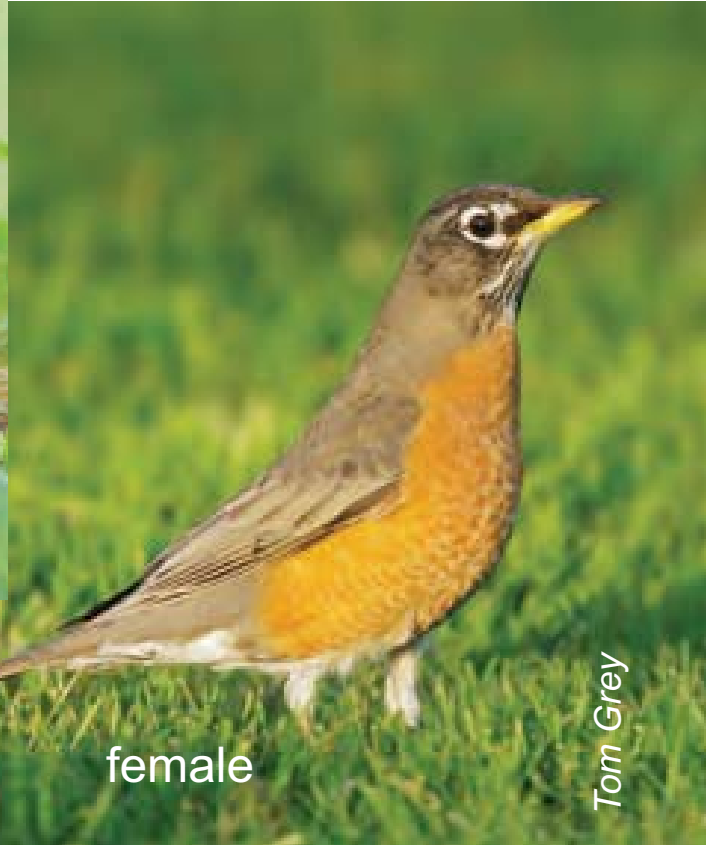
Feeding: Drops down to the ground from a perch to capture insects; also eats berries.

Conservation: Increasing. Preserve dead and dying trees. Place nest boxes in open areas. Minimize pesticide use.





male



female

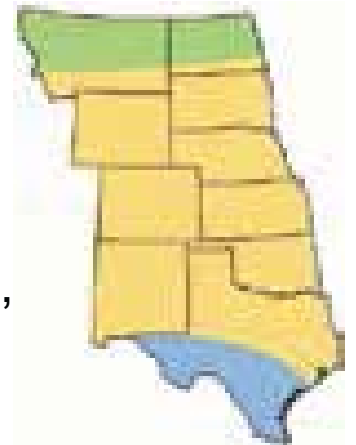
American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)

Identification: 10". Gray back and wings, reddish orange breast and belly. The male's head is black and the female's is gray.

Habitat: Grasslands with trees, open woodlands, homesteads, towns. Nests in trees, shrubs, under eaves of buildings.

Feeding: Runs across the ground, stopping occasionally to pick up insects; picks small fruits from shrubs.

Conservation: Stable. Minimize pesticide use.





Bill Schmoker

Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*)

Identification: 12". Rusty back and wings, long rusty tail, rusty cap on a gray head, brown streaks on white breast and belly.

Habitat: Dense shrubby areas. Nests on the ground or in a shrub or tree.

Feeding: Collects its food from the ground. Often heard foraging through dead leaves and other plant litter.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain shrubby areas. Minimize pesticide use.





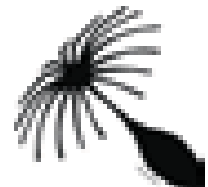
European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Identification: 8". In summer, black overall with a yellow bill. In winter, the bill is black, and black body feathers tipped with white give it a spotted appearance.

Habitat: Woodlands, especially near human habitation. Nests in tree cavities or any suitable opening in a building or other structure.

Feeding: Eats a wide variety of foods that it collects from the ground.

Conservation: This is an invasive, non-native species that competes with native species for nesting sites.



female



J.M. Garg, CC BY-SA 3.0

Adam Kumiszczka, CC BY-SA 3.0



male

House Sparrow

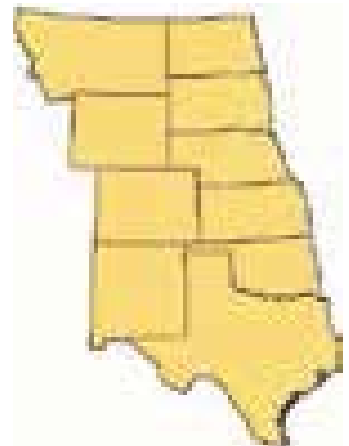
(*Passer domesticus*)

Identification: 6". Male has brown and black back and wings, gray crown, chestnut nape and face with whitish cheek, black bib and breast, white belly; female has grayish brown breast, buffy eyebrow, brown and gray back and wings.

Habitat: Closely tied to human habitation and will nest in virtually any available cavity in buildings.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: This is an invasive, non-native species that competes with native species for nesting sites.





Doug Backlund

Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*)

Identification: 7". Sparrow-like but with a thinner bill. Brownish above, streaked breast, whitish belly, pink-orange legs. White outer tail feathers are obvious when in flight. The male sings while circling high overhead.

Habitat: Areas with medium-high grasses. Nest is a domed structure on the ground.

Feeding: Collects insects and a small amount of seed from the ground.

Conservation: Declining at an alarming rate. Maintain open grasslands and control encroaching shrubs and trees. Delay mowing until after mid-July.





Tom Grey

American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*)

Identification: 5". In summer, male is canary yellow with black wings, tail, and forehead; female is duller and lacks the black on the head. In winter, both sexes are yellowish gray with black wings, pale yellow head. Sometimes called Wild Canary.

Habitat: Open areas with shrubs or trees. The cup nest is placed in trees.

Feeding: Collects its food from the ground and from plants.

Conservation: Stable. Maintain wooded areas along waterways.





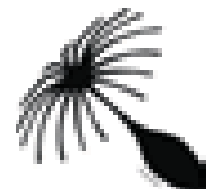
Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*)

Identification: 6". Winter birds have a brown back with black streaks, rusty collar (male), streaked sides, smudge on the chest (male), and a dark tail with whitish corners. Late-winter males may show breeding colors - black face outlined with white, and rusty color on back of the head and neck.

Habitat: Breeds in Arctic tundra; winters in cropland and pastures of the Great Plains and Midwest U.S.

Feeding: Picks up seeds from the ground.

Conservation: Stable. Leave stubble in cropland through the winter.





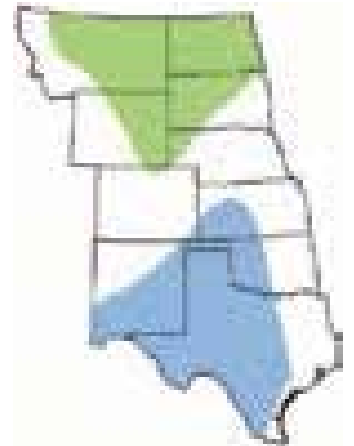
Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*)

Identification: 6". Male: black and gray back and wings, chestnut-colored patch at the nape of the neck, black crown, white eyebrow, white throat, black breast and upper belly. Female: black and brown overall. Both sexes have a black triangle in the tail that can be seen when the bird flies.

Habitat: Grasslands, especially where the grass is short to medium height. Nests on the ground.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain large areas of grassland with diverse vegetation structure. Graze mixed-grass prairie moderately to intensively; graze wet areas in short grass prairie at light to moderate intensity. Minimize pesticide use.





Andreasolitare, CC BY-SA 4.0

McCown's Longspur (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*)

Identification: 6". Male has black crown and chest, gray belly, and rufous bars in wings. Hind-neck gray (brown or rufous in other longspurs). Female grayish brown with dusky streaks on back and sides. Both sexes have white tails with all tips and center feathers being black.

Habitat: Sparse shortgrass prairie and with bare or nearly bare ground.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grasslands. Control encroaching shrubs and trees. Minimize pesticide use.





Dan Streifel

Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)

Identification: 7". In winter, mostly white with varying amounts of brown streaking, flashing white wing patches when it flies. Late-winter males may show breeding colors - pure white with black back and wing edges.

Habitat: Arctic tundra species that winters in fields and pastures of the Great Plains and Midwest U.S.

Feeding: Picks up seeds from the ground.

Conservation: Stable. Keep stubble in cropland through the winter.





Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*)

Identification: 5". Male has a black mask, yellow throat, pale belly, and drab olive brown back. Female is duller and does not have the black mask. Song sounds like *witchity-witchity-witchity*.

Habitat: Streamside brushy areas, willow stands, cattails. Bulky nest is well-hidden in dense low vegetation such as willow clumps, bushes, or cattails.

Feeding: Picks insects from leaves and tree trunks.

Conservation: Stable. Maintain streamside vegetation and protect from grazing livestock. Minimize pesticide use.





Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga petechia*)

Identification: 5". Small, plump yellow bird with prominent dark eye; male has distinctive rusty red vertical streaks on the breast.

Habitat: Shrubby areas near water, homesteads. The nest is placed in shrubs or trees.

Feeding: Eats insects picked off the foliage of shrubs and trees.

Conservation: Stable. Maintain shrubs near water and existing trees.





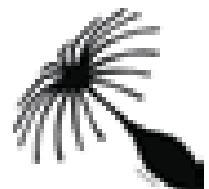
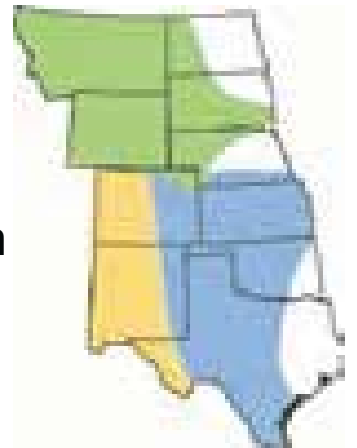
Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*)

Identification: 8". Male has a long black tail, black back, head, and breast, white belly, reddish brown sides, black wings with white spots; female is similar, but dark grayish brown where the male is black.

Habitat: Shrubby areas. Nests on the ground under a shrub or low in a shrub.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground. Often very noisy as it rakes away dead leaves with both feet to find food.

Conservation: Stable or increasing. Maintain patches of dense shrubs.





Mark Nenadov, CC BY 2.0, Wikimedia Commons

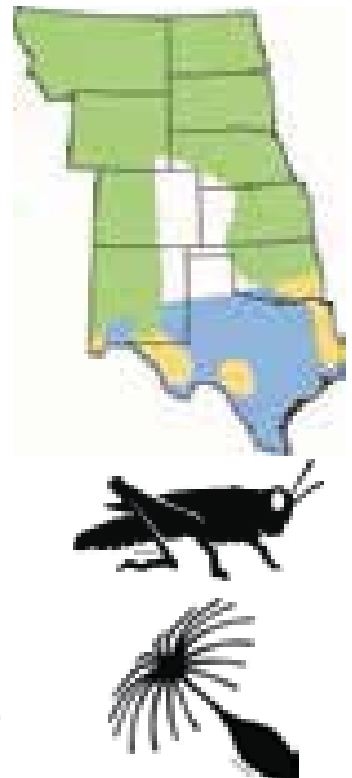
Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*)

Identification: 5". Bright rufous cap, prominent white eyebrow, dark line through the eye, brown streaked back and wings, and dirty white underparts.

Habitat: Any open woodlands with conifers including juniper shrublands, pine forests, shelterbelts, city parks, and residential yards. The open cup-shaped nest is placed in conifer trees and bushes.

Feeding: Picks insects from foliage and bark, often low in trees and bushes.

Conservation: Stable. Minimize pesticide use.



Tom Grey



Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*)

Identification: 5". Distinctive contrasting head pattern has a sharply outlined ear patch, buffy eyebrow stripe, and white stripe on top of the head. This bird also has unstreaked whitish underparts, rich brown streaked back and wings, gray nape, and a pinkish bill.

Habitat: Undisturbed grasslands with scattered shrubs and trees; woodland edges. Cup-shaped nest placed on the ground within a grass tuft, or higher in shrubs and small trees.

Feeding: Picks up insects from the ground or up in foliage; gleans seeds from the ground or directly from plants.

Conservation: Decreasing. Avoid haying or grazing undisturbed shrubby grasslands. Maintain brushy edges of woodlands. Minimize pesticide use.





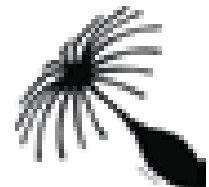
Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*)

Identification: 5". Gray and brown with black markings on back and wings, unmarked gray breast and belly, gray eyebrow. The tail is fairly long for a sparrow, and has a distinctive notch. The male sings from the tops of shrubs.

Habitat: Dry areas with yucca, sagebrush, or other shrubs. Nests low in a shrub or cactus.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain sagebrush stands; control invasive grasses (such as cheatgrass) and encroaching trees.





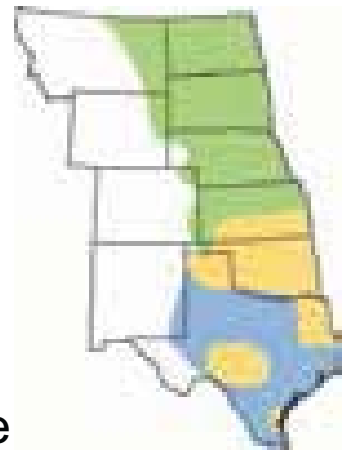
Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*)

Identification: 5". Rust-orange top of head, white ring around the eye, grayish white face and underparts, brown streaked back and wings, and bright pink bill and legs.

Habitat: Old fields, brushy grasslands, woodlot edges. Cup-shaped nest placed in trees and shrubs. Often raises two broods of young in one summer.

Feeding: Picks insects from leaves; also forages on the ground for seeds.

Conservation: Increasing. Avoid haying or grazing old fields. Maintain brushy edges of woodlots. Minimize pesticide use.





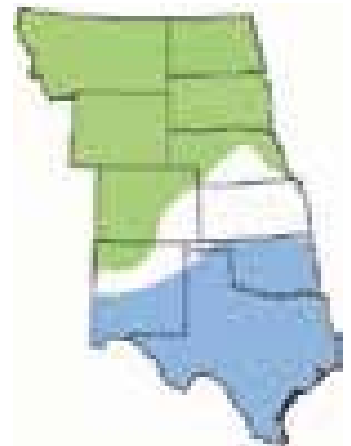
Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*)

Identification: 6". Gray and brown with black markings on back and wings, fine black streaks on the breast. White outer tail feathers are conspicuous when the bird flies. At close range a small reddish brown shoulder patch is sometimes obvious.

Habitat: Present in a wide variety of habitats, including grasslands, ditches, and grass strips in cropland. Nests on the ground, next to a clump of vegetation.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grasslands. Use no-till or reduced-till practices in croplands. Delay haying of grass strips until after mid-July.





Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Identification: 6". Gray, black, and tan on the back and wings, grayish breast with central black spot, white belly, white stripe through a reddish brown cap, reddish brown check patch, and striking black and white pattern on the face. Large white corners on the tail are obvious when the bird flies.

Habitat: Drier grasslands with patches of bare ground, scattered shrubs or trees. Usually nests on the ground, but occasionally in a shrub or tree.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grassland with scattered trees and shrubs.





Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*)

Identification: 7". Male is all black with large white patch on each wing. Female is mottled grayish brown and white on the back and head, white breast with grayish brown streaks, white belly, large white patch on each grayish brown wing.

Habitat: Grasslands with some shrubs, also fallow fields, stubble, grainfields. Nests on the ground.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain large tracts of open grassland with scattered shrubs. Minimize pesticide use. Use no-till or minimum-till practices in cropland.



USFWS, Public Domain



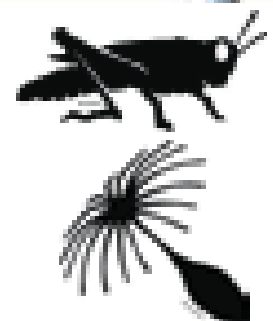
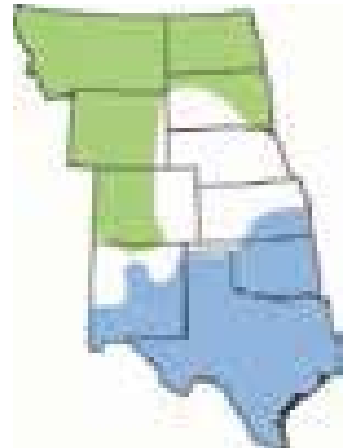
Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

Identification: 5". Brown streaked back, brown streaks underneath, yellowish eyebrow stripe, whitish stripe on top of the head, and notched tail.

Habitat: Grasslands, pastures, wet meadows and other open country. Nests in depression in ground; rim of the nest is flush with the ground.

Feeding: Forages for insects and seeds on the ground.

Conservation: Increasing. Delay haying of grasslands until mid-August. Minimize pesticide use.





Grasshopper Sparrow

(*Ammodramus savannarum*)

Identification: 5". Brown, black, gray, and white pattern on back and wings, brown head with thin white center stripe, stubby tail, buffy breast and sides, often with a yellowish orange spot in front of the eye. The head is fairly flat. Song is an insect-like buzz.

Habitat: Midgrass and tallgrass prairie, areas of taller grasses in shortgrass prairie, hayfields, grainfields. Nests on the ground at the base of a grass clump.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain large tracts of open grassland with medium or tall grasses.



USFWS Mountain Prairie/ Rick Bohn, CC BY 2.0



Baird's Sparrow (*Centronyx bairdii*)

Identification: 5". Buffy and black markings, buffy eyebrow, buffy central stripe on the cap, short dark streaks at the top and sides of the white breast. A secretive bird that rarely flies, prefers to walk on the ground.

Habitat: Native grasslands with medium or tall grasses. Nests on the ground.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain native grasslands with medium or tall grasses. Control invasive plants and encroaching shrubs.





Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)

Identification: 6". Reddish brown and dark brown on tail, back, and wings; reddish brown and gray stripes on head; white breast with brown streaks, usually forming a central dark spot; white belly.

Habitat: Shrublands or riparian areas with dense vegetation. Nests on the ground or in a low tree or shrub.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain shrubby areas, especially near water.





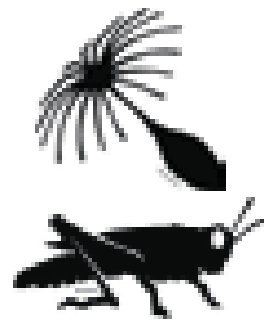
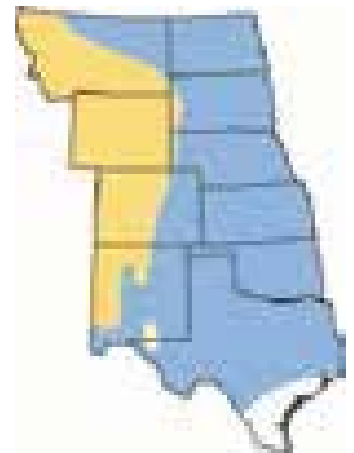
Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*)

Identification: 6". Gray-hooded, sparrow-shaped bird with white belly, pale-colored bill, and white outer tail feathers that are conspicuous when the bird flies away. Several color morphs may be seen during migration, including birds with black hoods, birds with rusty or brown backs and pink sides, and birds with prominent white wing bars. Colors on females are duller than those of males.

Habitat: In winter and during migration, occurs in brushy areas, yards, and shelterbelts. Breeds in conifer forests, such as in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Nests in a shallow depression with overhead protection, especially against a vertical surface such as a bank or rock.

Feeding: Primarily searches for food on the ground.

Conservation: Stable. Provide cover, such as brush piles, during the winter.





Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*)

Identification: 7". Male has black triangle on throat, both sexes have yellow breast, whitish belly, rusty brown patch on each shoulder, cone-shaped bill. Male's song sounds like *dik dik dik-cissel*.

Habitat: Found in habitat types with dense grasses and forbs, including open grasslands and shrubby areas. Nests on the ground or in shrubs, trees, or other vegetation up to 6 ft high.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain large tracts of grassland. Delay mowing until after mid-August. Minimize pesticide use.





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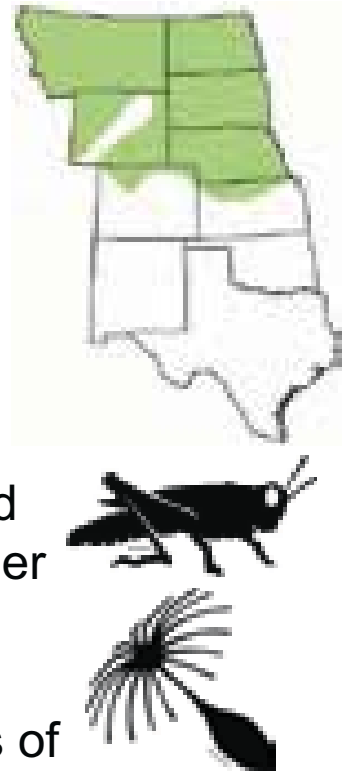
Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)

Identification: 7". Male is black overall with white patches on the wings and a large buffy patch on the back of the head; a white rump is noticeable when the bird flies. Female has black and brown streaks on the back and wings, white throat, thin brown streaks on the crown and the white breast, belly, and sides, and a thin dark brown line behind the eye.

Habitat: Grasslands (especially wet areas) and grainfields. Nests on the ground, often with other Bobolinks nesting nearby.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain large tracts of open grassland. Delay mowing until after mid-July. Minimize pesticide use.





Glen Tepke

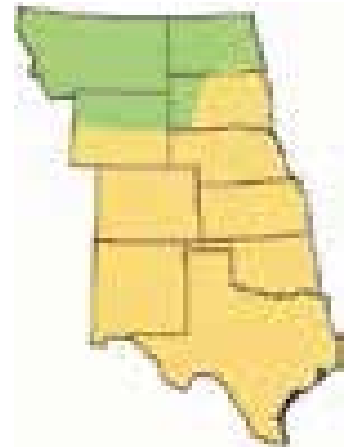
Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

Identification: 8". Male is black overall with a bright red patch on each shoulder. Female looks like a very large sparrow, with thick brown streaks on the breast and belly, and a buffy eyebrow.

Habitat: Marshes, wet meadows, hayfields, grainfields, and towns. Nests in emergent wetland vegetation, shrubs, or trees.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground or in low vegetation.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain wetlands and wetland vegetation.





Doug Backlund

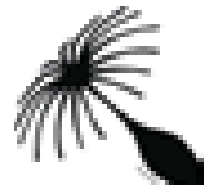
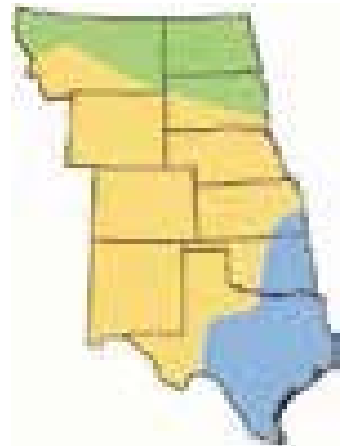
Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

Identification: 9". Black and brown on the back and wings, a yellow throat, breast, and belly with a black "V" on the breast.

Habitat: Grasslands, croplands, open shrublands. The ground nest is hidden by a dome of vegetation.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain open grasslands. Minimize disturbance during the nesting season as they are very sensitive and easily abandon their nests. Delay mowing until after mid-July.



Tom Grey



male



female

Tony Leukering

Yellow-headed Blackbird

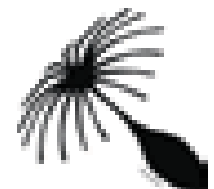
(*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)

Identification: 10". Male has lemon yellow head and breast, black elsewhere except for white patch on the wing. Female is brown overall with some yellow on the face; yellow chin and breast.

Habitat: Breeds in marshes, winters in grain fields. Nest is placed in emergent wetlands vegetation, such as cattails.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Stable or declining. Maintain wetlands and wetland vegetation.





Brewer's Blackbird

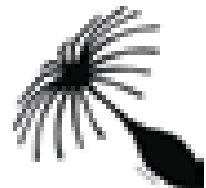
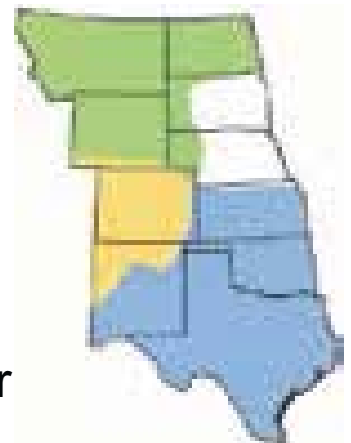
(*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

Identification: 9". Male is black overall with yellow eyes. Female is brown overall with dark brown eyes. Compared to the Common Grackle, the tail is shorter and the bill is shorter and straighter.

Habitat: Shrubby areas, open woodlands, homesteads. Nests on the ground or low in a shrub.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground.

Conservation: Declining but still abundant.





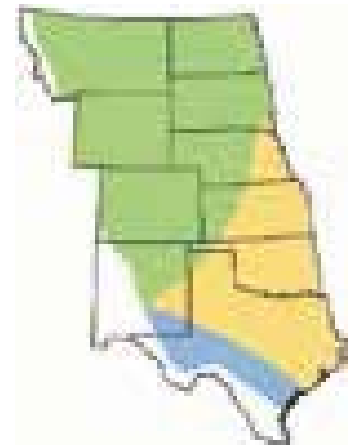
Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*)

Identification: 12". Black overall with yellow eye and long tail; female has a shorter tail. The bill and tail are longer than in the Brewer's Blackbird.

Habitat: Open areas with trees, such as around homesteads and woodland edges. Nests in trees (especially conifers) and shrubs.

Feeding: Eats a wide variety of foods collected on the ground.

Conservation: Declining but still one of the most abundant species in North America.





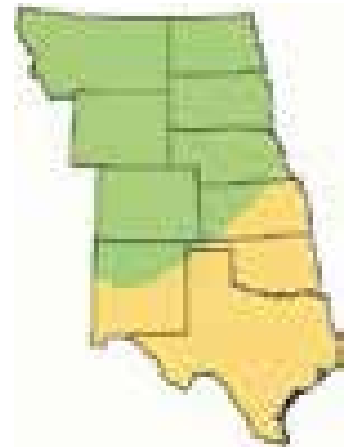
Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*)

Identification: 7". Male has black body with dark brown head, female is grayish brown with indistinct dark markings, both have black cone-shaped bill. Male's song sounds like *glug-glug-gee*.

Habitat: Grassy areas, especially where livestock are present. Does not build a nest; instead, lays its eggs in the nests of other birds to raise the young. As a result, the "host" birds often are unable to raise any young of their own.

Feeding: Collects its food on the ground. Often captures insects stirred up by livestock.

Conservation: Declining but still very common. In some areas, cowbirds pose a risk for some rare species.





Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*)

Identification: 7". Male has black head, back, tail, and wings, reddish brown breast, belly, and rump; female is yellowish overall with gray back and wings.

Habitat: Open woods, trees near open areas, especially near water. Builds hanging nest in trees.

Feeding: Eats insects, fruit, and blossoms collected in trees.

Conservation: Stable or declining. Maintain existing trees, especially near water. Minimize use of pesticides.





Bullock's



Baltimore

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Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*)
Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*)

Identification: 8". Male has black back, black and white wings, orange tail, rump, breast, and belly. Bullock's male has black head with orange face; Baltimore has all-black head. Females of both species have yellow-orange tail, head, and breast, gray and white wings, and grayish white belly.

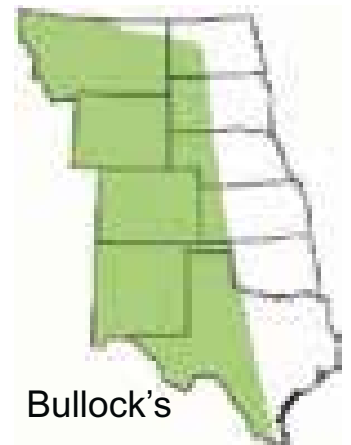
Habitat: Trees near open areas. Builds hanging nest in trees.

Feeding: Eats insects, fruits, and nectar collected in trees.

Conservation: Declining. Maintain existing trees, especially near water. Minimize use of pesticides.



Baltimore



Bullock's



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Mark the boxes to keep track of which species you have seen.

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Key to the Diet Icons

These icons represent the primary foods of each bird species.



Grain, grass seeds, forb seeds



Fruits and berries



Aquatic insects, crayfish, snails



Grasshoppers and other insects, spiders, worms



Fish



Frogs, toads, snakes, lizards



Adult birds, nestlings, eggs



Mice, voles, prairie dogs, ground squirrels, rabbits



Carrion (dead animals)

