



**Wilson's Warbler**

*Wilsonia pusilla*

L 4½-5"

This dazzling, yellow warbler can be easy to spot, but difficult to positively identify because it virtually never stops moving. A tireless insectivore, the ever restless Wilson's warbler seems to chase bugs constantly, hopping, darting, gleaning, probing, and suddenly flitting upward to snatch airborne prey. While the yellow and olive-green female Wilson's might be confused with another warbler species, the silky black cap of the male is distinctive. Quite fond of water, you can sometimes get a good look at this bird by pausing quietly near the shallows at the edge of a stream or pond.



**White-Crowned Sparrow**

*Zonotrichia leucophrys*

L 6-7"

Plump, plucky, and striking in its appearance, the white-crowned sparrow is a common visitor to residential seed feeders and a year-round resident in the Bay Area. The bold black and white crown stripes, the yellow-orange or pink bill, and the solid gray breast are key diagnostic markings for this species. At least four sub-species of this bird are found in Northern California. Often feeding on the ground, look for white-crowns energetically scratch-kicking through leaf-litter for seeds as you hike parkland trails.



**Song Sparrow**

*Melospiza melodia*

L 5-7"

At first glance the song sparrow seems a rather unassuming "little brown bird." Its most distinctive field marks are the dark spot centered on the streaked brown breast and dark "whisker" marks on either side of the throat. However, when the male of this species belts out his sweet, rich, and highly complex springtime song, he lays legitimate claim to the title "songbird." When flushed from the cover of grassy hillside, chaparral scrub or marshland this sparrow pumps its tail vigorously as it flies low and zips back into hiding. Coyote Hills Regional Park and other shoreline parks along San Francisco Bay provide critical habitat for a special race of this species, the Alameda salt marsh song sparrow. This song sparrow is listed by the state as a "species of special concern."



**Black-Headed Grosbeak**

*Pheucticus melanocephalus*

L 7-8"

A major celebrity of the songbird world, the black-headed grosbeak has it all: spectacular color, robust size, and a rich and beautiful song. From April to July the striking orange and black male grosbeak chooses a somewhat concealed perch within the leaf canopy. Here he establishes his territory with a deep, rich, joyful, warbling song which carols along for many seconds only to be repeated moments later. Black-headed grosbeaks are most common in oak woodlands, riparian or streamside habitats, and among groves of conifers. Consuming both insects and seeds, grosbeaks sometimes appear at backyard feeding stations where they dash in to snatch a seed before shyly disappearing into nearby vegetation.



**Northern Mockingbird**

*Mimus polyglottos*

L 8-10"

A neighborhood and parkland favorite, the mockingbird is the quintessential songbird. With literally hundreds of songs in its repertoire, this bird lives up to its scientific name which means "many tongued mimic." In addition to composing his own varied and brilliant vocal productions, the male mockingbird imitates birds and other animals, car alarms, whistling tea kettles, and a host of other inanimate noise makers. Expressing his springtime passion with wild abandon, the male often sings at night, especially during a full moon. Sleekly elegant in gray plumage with white wing patches, mockingbirds eat insects and berries and can be easily attracted to backyard feeders.

**Chestnut-Backed Chickadee**

*Poecile rufescens*

L 4-4½"

Naturalist Aldo Leopold once called the chickadee a "small bundle of large enthusiasms." Partial to treetops, especially conifers, these lively birds dangle fearlessly like tiny acrobats as they work to extract insects, their eggs, and larvae. Look for a tiny bird with a black cap and bib, and rust-colored back and sides. Chickadees are quite vocal birds, calling to one another often as they forage with a cheerful raspy (*chickadee-dee*). Both male and female care for the young. Sunflower seeds and suet attract them to backyard feeders.



**Yellow-Rumped Warbler**

*Dendroica coronata*

L 5-6"

In all plumages this warbler sports a bright yellow rump-patch which makes it one of the easier warblers to identify. One of the most abundant of all wood warbler species, the male "butter butt," in breeding plumage, is also one of the most striking. He has bright yellow on the sides, rump, throat, and crown as well as black (sometimes dark blue-gray) on the breast and cheeks. White tail-spots, wing patches, and eye-rings complete the striking picture of this diminutive but dazzling bird. Look for yellow-rumps foraging for insects in willow, pine or oak woodlands.



**Spotted Towhee**

*Pipilo maculatus*

L 7-8½"

This large colorful sparrow is not the premier songster. A call note like an annoying door-bell buzzer echoing from within a dense thicket of poison oak or blackberry may be your first introduction to this shy bird. Spending much of its time feeding on the ground, among dense undergrowth, the towhee noisily scratch-kicks dry leaf litter to uncover hidden seeds. You will usually hear it long before you see it and you may think you're hearing a much larger critter. When the spotted towhee finally hops into view, the sleek black, rust-red, and crisp white coloring and its sparkling red eyes will dazzle and delight. This bird is definitely worth the wait.

