

Songbirds are often beautiful, and their songs are familiar, pleasing sounds to many people. Making up almost half of all bird species in the world, songbirds are also known as “**perching birds**.” Their feet have three toes facing forward and one facing back, allowing them to easily grasp their perch, even while sleeping.

Male songbirds pour forth their melodies on spring mornings, and many sing from mid-winter through mid-summer. They use songs to announce their claim to nesting territories and to warn other birds of the same species to stay away. If all goes well, the irresistible combination of colorful plumage and vibrant song will attract a mate, and a nest full of young birds will be the result. Males tend to stop singing when close to the nest to avoid attracting predators. Songbirds also produce other shorter and simpler sounds known as calls, used to communicate during all seasons.

Both the male and female adults of some species take care of their nestlings. In others, only the female incubates the eggs and feeds the young. During the spring, listen for baby birds in the nest chipping aggressively when their parents are close, begging for food. Once the young birds fledge (leave the nest and start flying), they often continue to beg the adults for food through late spring and sometimes even summer.

When exploring your East Bay Regional Parks, your neighborhood, or even your backyard, it may be possible to see and hear many of the birds listed in this brochure. In whatever way you choose to study songbirds, the experience is sure to be rewarding! The following are just a few favorites among the many songbird species commonly seen and heard in the East Bay Regional Parks.

Hear the Songbirds

An internet search will show many birdwatching apps for smartphones and computers. Most include songs! Comparing recordings with live songs is an excellent way to identify birds. However, please **DO NOT** play recordings outside; the sudden appearance of a competing “bird” (the sound coming from your phone) will be very stressful to the birds you are observing.

To hear songbird audio clips of the birds in this brochure, scan this QR code with a smart phone camera, its QR code reader, or go to www.ebparks.org/songbirds. Songs sometimes vary by region and even by the individual bird, so what you hear in the wild may sound differently than the recording.



Songbird Resources

- Field Guides**
- The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America, David Allen Sibley
 - Western Birds, Roger Tory Peterson
 - Field Guide to the Birds of North America, National Geographic
 - Field Guide to the Birds of North America, National Wildlife Federation
 - Field Guide to the Birds, Western Region, Donald and Lillian Stokes
- Birder Resources**
- www.goldengateaudubon.org



American Robin
Turdus migratorius
Length: 8½-10 inches

An all-time backyard favorite in much of North America, the robin is also widespread in undeveloped areas of California. Look for this bird and listening for them as they squirm near the top of the soil. The handsome rust-colored breast of this thrush, combined with its elegantly cheerful song (cheerily-cheer-up-cheerio), make the robin easily identifiable.

Bewick's Wren

Thryomanes bewickii
Length: 4½-5¼ inches

Fitting through parkland open forest and scrubby chaparral, or probing around your house, the always-curious Bewick's wren inspects cracks and crevices for a possible insect meal or future nest site. The striking white eyebrow stripe distinguishes this year-round resident from other wrens. The Bewick's long tail is usually held in a stiff, vertical tilt and waved about threateningly as the wren scolds territorial intruders. As a loud singer, this wren produces a complex and variable collection of burr-like buzzing, ending in a long, sweet trill.

Common Songbirds in the East Bay Regional Park District



2950 Peralta Oaks Court, Oakland, CA 94605
1-888-EBPARKS or 1-888-327-2757 (TRS 711)
ebparks.org

Visitor Centers

- Ardenwood Historic Farm, Fremont**
510-544-2797, awvisit@ebparks.org
- Big Break Regional Shoreline, Oakland**
Big Break Visitor Center at the Delta
510-544-3050, bigbreakvisit@ebparks.org
- Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, Antioch**
510-544-2750, bdvisit@ebparks.org
- Coyote Hills Regional Park, Fremont**
510-544-3220, chvisit@ebparks.org
- Crown Memorial State Beach, Alameda**
Crab Cove Visitor Center and Aquarium
510-544-3187, ccove@ebparks.org
- Del Valle Regional Park, Livermore**
510-544-3146, svisit@ebparks.org
Open summer weekends
- Garin/Dry Creek Pioneer Regional Parks, Hayward**
510-544-3220 (Coyote Hills), chvisit@ebparks.org
Open summer weekends
- Sunol-Ohlone Regional Wilderness, Sunol**
510-544-3249, svisit@ebparks.org
Open weekends only
- Tilden Regional Park, Berkeley**
Botanic Garden: 510-544-3169, bgarden@ebparks.org
Tilden Nature Area/Environmental Education Center
510-544-2233, tnarea@ebparks.org

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On the cover: Song sparrow.
Photos courtesy Jerry Ting

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Wilson's Warbler

Wilsonia pusilla
Length: 4½-5 inches

This dazzling, yellow warbler can be easy to spot, but difficult to positively identify because it almost never stops moving. A tireless insectivore, the Wilson's warbler seems to chase bugs constantly by 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. They are fond of water; you may get a good look at this bird by pausing quietly near the shallow edge of a stream or pond.

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Dendroica coronata
Length: 5-6 inches

One of the most abundant warbler species, this dazzling bird is identified by its bright yellow rump patch. The male “butter butt” in breeding plumage also has bright yellow on the sides, throat, and crown as well as black (sometimes dark blue-gray) on the breast and cheeks. His song is a sweet warble. Look for yellow-rumps foraging for insects in trees and tall shrubs, sometimes flying up to catch them in the air.

