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Migrating Shorebirds Bay Area



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Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

On moderately deep inland lakes with marshy edges, keep an eye out for Western Grebes (summer)

Several breeding pairs, as well as Clark's Grebes, can be seen at Klamath Lake in Oregon

Move to the Pacific Coast during the season when they are not breeding (although some remain on inland lakes)

Can easily get fantastic views of this attractive grebe because they stay rather close to the beach.

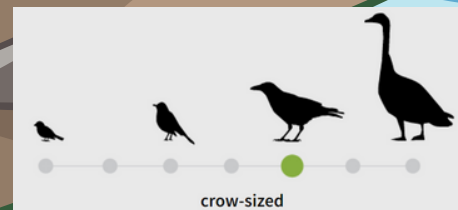
Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Fish

Nesting: Floating

Behavior: Surface Dive

Conservation: Declining



Clark's Grebe

(Aechmophorus clarkii)

On freshwater lakes with marshy edges, keep an eye out for Clark's Grebes during the breeding season

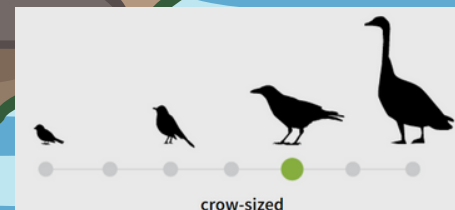
Look for Clark's brighter yellow-orange bill as they migrate to coastal waters around the Pacific Coast in the winter, where they may coexist with Western Grebes

Habitat: Marshes

Food: Fish

Behavior: Surface Dive

Conservation: Declining



American Wigeon (*Mareca americana*)

August-April are the best months to watch American Wigeons in the Lower 48

Check marshes, ponds, and agricultural areas during these months, and listen for their distinctive nasal whistle

The male's brilliant white forehead and sides of his rump will catch your eye from a distance. To get the greatest views, observe American Wigeons from a distance as they are quickly startled if disturbed

Become considerably more cautious during hunting season and may start feeding in fields at night and in bigger, safer lakes/ponds with vegetation cover during the day

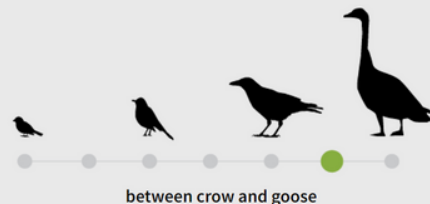
Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Plants

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Dabbling

Conservation: Low Concern



American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*)

Their black-and-white bodies, long, upturned bills, and beautiful profile set them apart from other wading birds in shallow marshes

Often hunt in shallow water where there is little cover from foliage, and they nest in places where there is hardly any vegetation

In North America (arid interior), they reproduce near wetlands, but in the winter, many of them migrate to coastal lagoons, salt ponds, and mudflats. They frequently scavenge alongside the tiny Black-necked Stilt here

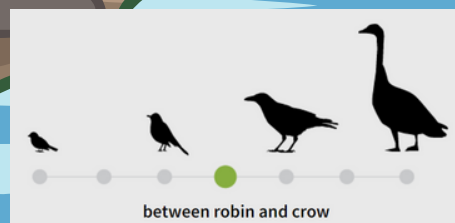
Habitat: Marshes

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Probing

Conservation: Low Conservation



Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*)

(Spring and Fall migration) when the birds land in shallow wetlands and occasionally forage in no more than puddles in flooded agricultural fields, look for Green-winged Teal over the majority of the continent

They coexist with other dabbling duck species, but if you look closely, you can see them because of their size and shape

Even the relatively uniform brown females can be identified by their profile, which features a short, compact body sitting high in the water and a relatively small bill. It's unlikely that a small brown duck in close proximity to a bunch of larger dabblers is a juvenile Mallard; instead, it could be a female Green-winged Teal. For additional proof, look for the buffy yellow band along the tail

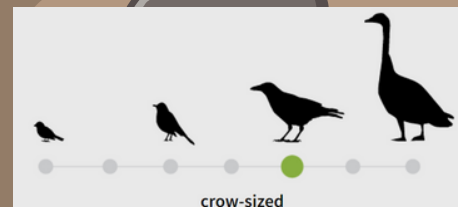
Habitat: Marshes

Food: Seeds

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Dabbler

Conservation: Low Conservation



American Coot

(*Fulica americana*)

Search lakes and ponds for a little, all-black bird with a dazzling white bill to identify American Coots

You might even observe them walking (not waddling) around on land with their relatively long, yellow-green legs

They may be along the perimeters, among plants, or out in open water. In large flocks of coots and other waterfowl, sometimes numbering in the thousands, they can be seen during the winter

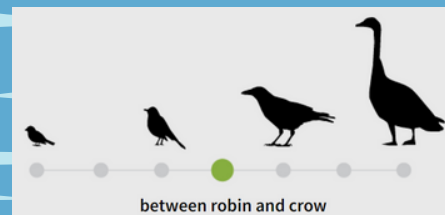
Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Plants

Nesting: Floating

Behavior: Surface Dive

Conservation: Low Conservation



Double-crested Cormorant (*Nannopterum auritum*)

Look for perched black waterbirds with distinctive S-shaped crooks in their necks that are smaller and have shorter legs than herons around lakes and coasts

On the water, their heads and bills are typically tilted slightly upward. They may also be observed lying on their backs with their wings outstretched

Cormorant flocks often fly in sloppy Vs or crooked lines. Cormorants fly with their heads held high, necks slightly bent, bellies hanging low, and slow, strained wingbeats

Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Fish

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Surface Dive

Conservation: Low Conservation



between crow and goose

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)

Places to find marbled godwits may be in their wintering grounds, where they gather in coastal estuaries and along shorelines

They hunt in small bodies of water, occasionally only getting their feet wet and other times standing in water up to their belly

They can be distinguished from other shorebirds thanks to their big size, very long, upturned bill, and cinnamon coloration. In contrast to Whimbrels, whose feet do not extend beyond the tail, check for their cinnamon wings and feet in flight

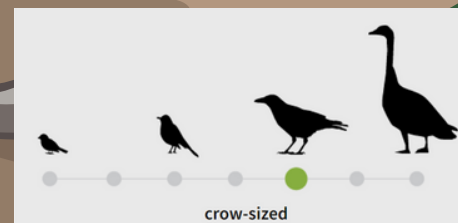
Habitat: Marshes

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Probing

Conservation: Declining



California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

Can be seen grazing in pastures and parking lots during the summer, as well as nesting along inland lakes and rivers

They relocate (seaside) throughout the winter, when they spend time bathing, feeding, and relaxing close to freshwater. To locate a roosting location (a place to sleep rest), search for a rivermouth along the coastline

Find a medium-sized bird with yellowish legs and a back that is a medium shade of gray. When they are flying, watch for wingbeats that are deeper and faster than those of larger gulls like herring gulls but slower and shallower than those of smaller gulls like ring-billed gulls

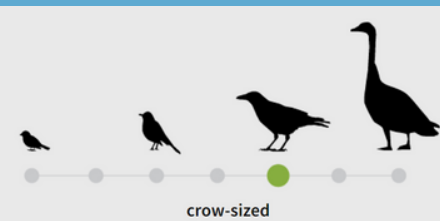
Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Ground Forager

Conservation: Low conservation



Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*)

Winter months are a fantastic time to search for Northern Shovelers migrating through national wildlife refuges (August–April). Keep an eye out for groups of ducks foraging intently on the edges of shallow places

You might also discover them in smaller, murkier pools of water because they tend to frequent stagnant pools of water more frequently than other ducks

If you don't quickly see the male's enormous bill, his dazzling white breast will undoubtedly catch your eye. Due to their relative lack of caution compared to other ducks, shovelers may allow for closer inspections without the need of a spotting scope

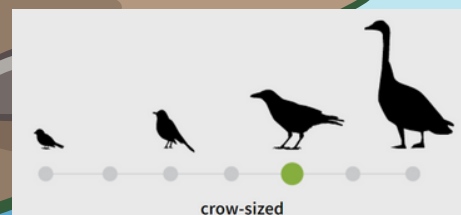
Habitat: Marshes

Food: Omnivore

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Dabbling

Conservation: Low conservation



Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*)

On the West Coast, search for this sizable sparrow in shrublands and weedy fields between fall and spring

This sparrow might be hopping around on the ground and raking through leaf litter, perching in weedy vegetation to consume seeds, or singing occasionally even in the dead of winter

You'll need to travel to the wilds of Alaska and far western Canada to see this bird in the summer

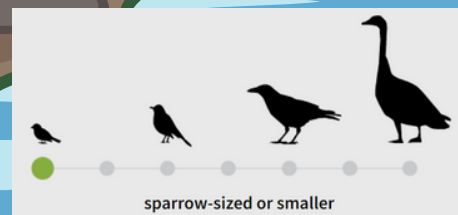
Habitat: Scrub

Food: Insects

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Ground Forager

Conservation: Low conservation



Willet

(*Tringa semipalmata*)

Willetts can be easily seen foraging near the water's edge in the winter

They are one of the larger common shorebirds, thus despite their lack of markings, you can easily identify them thanks to their bulky overall appearance, muted plumage, and thick, long bill

For final confirmation, keep an eye out for their unique black-and-white wing patterns and listen for the pill-will-willet sound

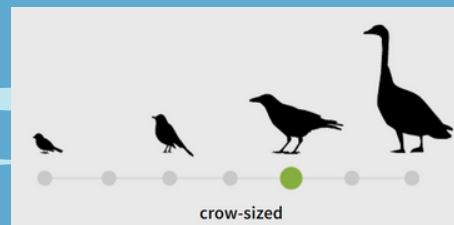
Habitat: Shorelines

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Probing

Conservation: Declining



Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*)

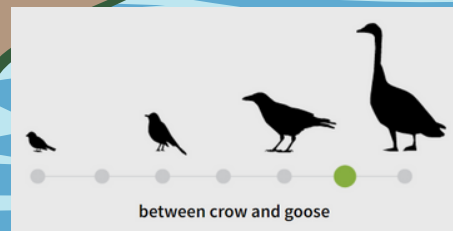
Going to the coast is frequently required to see a Greater Scaup

They use huge lakes like the Great Lakes while migrating (approx. from February-April and from October-November), although they often focus on coastal waters during the winter

They frequently group together in rafts made up entirely of one species

Propensity to sit far from shore and resemble their relative the Lesser Scaup (check ID section)

Habitat: Lakes and Ponds
Food: Aquatic Invertebrates
Nesting: Ground
Behavior: Surface Dive
Conservation: Steep Decline



Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*)

They use both smaller wetlands and huge lakes, such as the Great Lakes, from September-March, when they are not breeding

On larger bodies of water, look out for sizable flocks of ducks that may appear from a distance to be a dark mat of circling foliage

Lesser Scaup frequently utilizes ponds used for agriculture in the southern United States

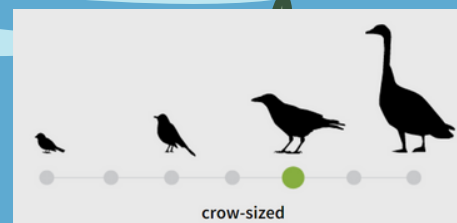
Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Surface Dive

Conservation: Low Concern



Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*)

Long-billed Curlew has a distinctive appearance that makes it stand out in both tidal mudflats and shortgrass prairies

The Whimbrel is the only other bird with a long bill, however it is neither as tall nor as long as the Whimbrel

On the breeding grounds, look out for a curlew with a long neck and long bill that is foraging in a line while frequently surrounded by other curlews. They forage in small groups and alongside other shorebirds, such as Willets and Marbled Godwits, during migration and on the wintering grounds

Look for them resting with their bill tucked under their shoulder or feeding in shallow marshes

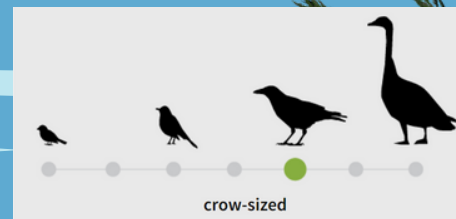
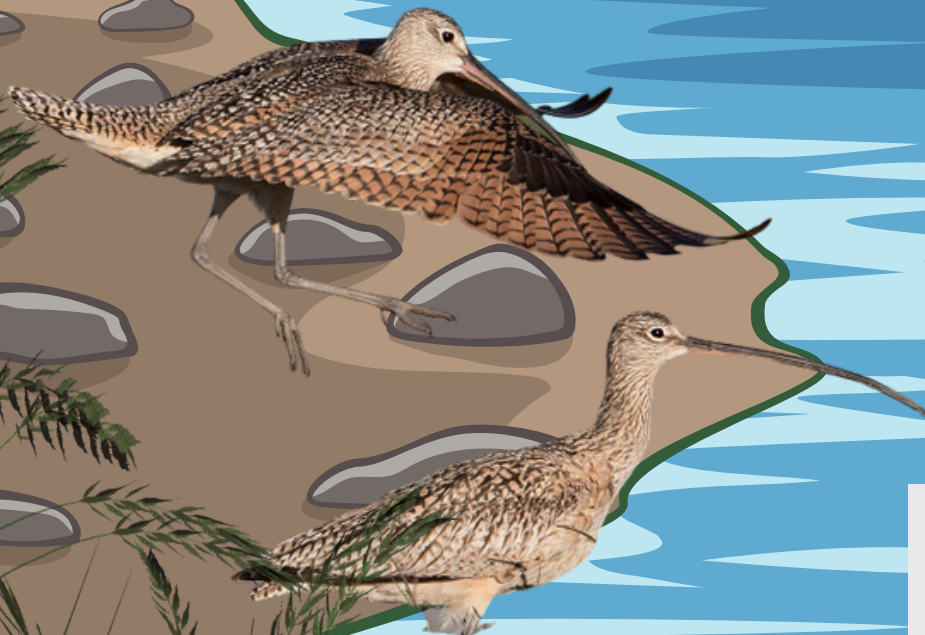
Habitat: Grasslands

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Probing

Conservation: Low Concern



Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*)

Ideal seasons for canvasback hunting in the United States are spring, fall, and winter

On open water, where their white bodies shine and the sloping forehead helps them stand out from other waterbirds, they congregate in big flocks

Because canvasbacks are prey, they frequently flush and have a tendency to be suspicious

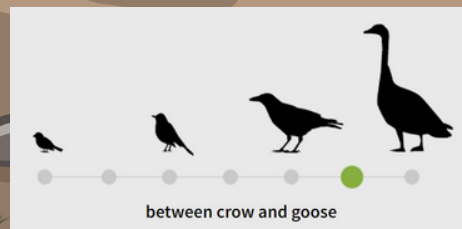
Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Plants

Nesting: Floating

Behavior: Surface Dive

Conservation: Low Concern



Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

Often be found in National Wildlife Refuges

Look for flocks of ducks that rise higher than the others in agricultural fields and shallow regions

Their long necks, slim bodies, bright white chests, and stripes along the necks of the males easily distinguish them from other ducks. However, they also venture out onto the water alongside Mallards, Northern Shovelers, other ducks, and American Coots. They typically forage in groups at the shallower borders of lakes and ponds

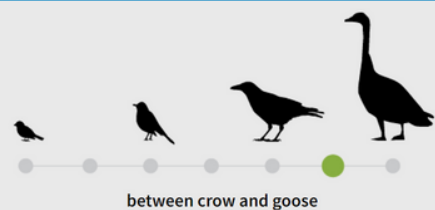
Habitat: Marshes

Food: Omnivore

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Dabbler

Conservation: Low Concern



Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*)

The majority of people observe least sandpipers during migration (April-May and July-October) or winter since they breed on the tundra of the far north

On mudflats or safe beaches, look for them. They can be found in large numbers as migrant birds on inland bodies of water, however they are most common along the beaches

Once you have located a suitable habitat of wet mud or sand, examine the water's edge for little sandpipers with warm brown upperparts and white underparts and a short, thin, slightly decurved bill. You may readily identify this bird if you can see its yellowish legs, but bear in mind that dirt stains can give their legs a dark appearance

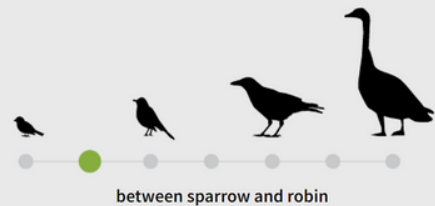
Habitat: Marshes

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Probing

Conservation: Low Concern



Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

Of all shorebirds, Black-necked Stilts are among the most noticeable and easily recognized in mudflats, saltmarshes, flooded fields, and salt pans

They are simple to find because they call frequently throughout the nesting season (and when they are being disturbed)

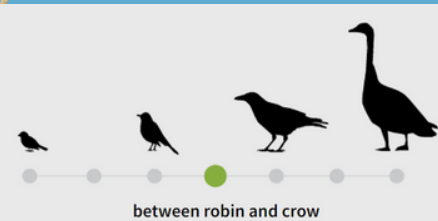
Habitat: Marshes

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Probing

Conservation: Low Concern



Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*)

These tiny, black-and-white ducks can be found in protected coves on the Atlantic or Pacific coasts or on inland ponds in southern North America during the winter

They spend half of their time foraging underwater, so scan slowly and carefully. In the central Canadian aspen parklands and boreal forest, you can visit their breeding sites close to lakes during the summer

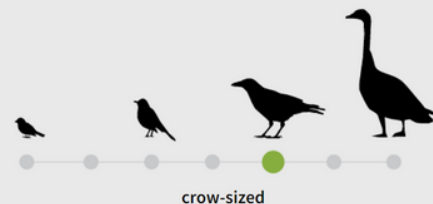
Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Cavity

Behavior: Surface dive

Conservation: Low Concern



Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*)

While you might assume that the beach is the ideal area to spot sandpipers, you can also spot Spotted Sandpipers near the edges of lakes, rivers, and streams

When in flight, keep an eye out for their stuttering wingbeats or search for them perched precariously on logs or stony banks

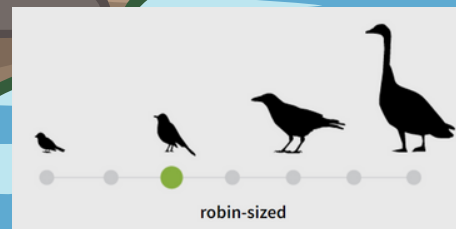
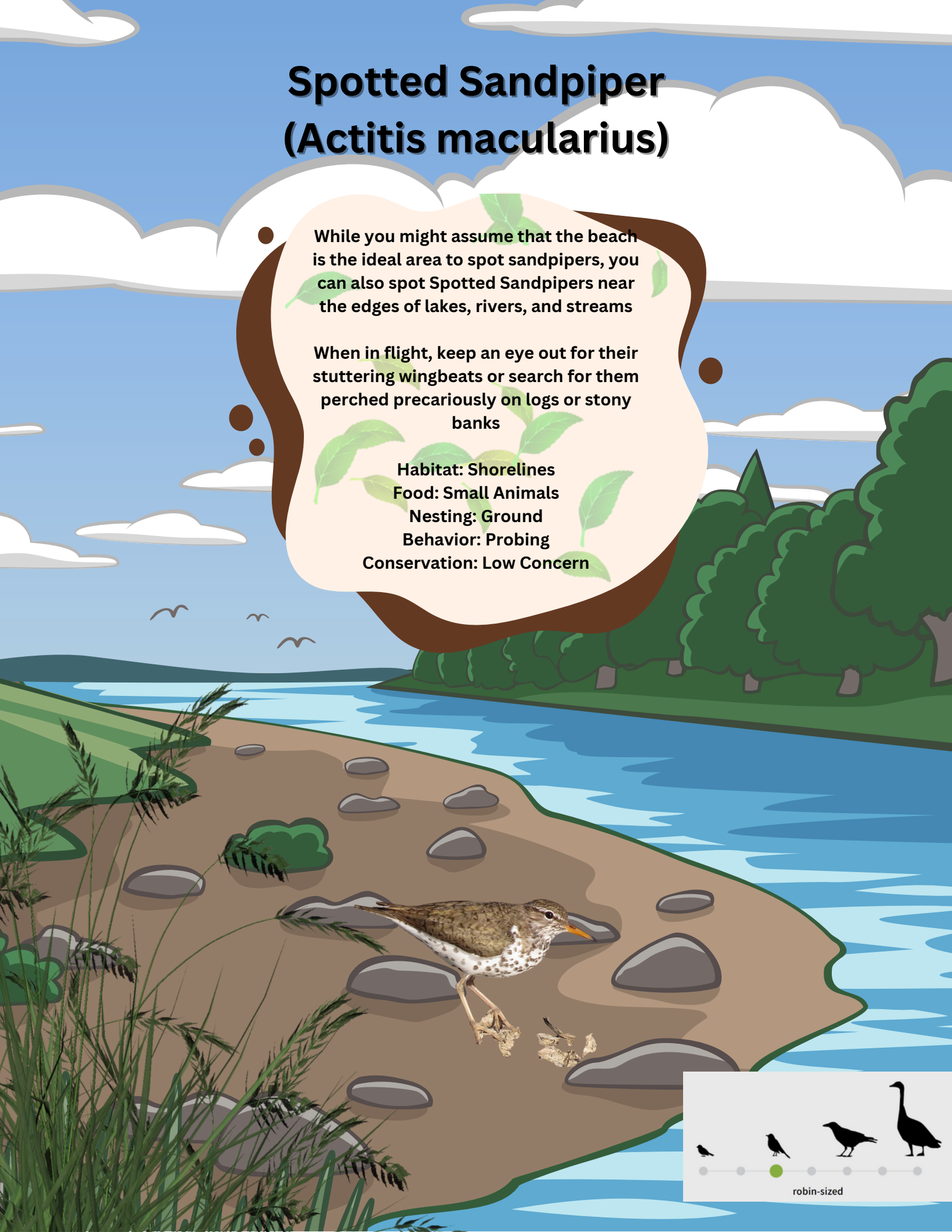
Habitat: Shorelines

Food: Small Animals

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Probing

Conservation: Low Concern



Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*)

Along rocky coasts, jetties, and breakwaters, black oystercatchers are quite simple to locate. Look for flat, stony reefs or shorelines that gradually drop into the water

They stay away from cliffs and high headlands, but are frequently spotted wandering directly on mussel beds that are made visible by low tides

Additionally, keep an ear out for their high, rising whistled sounds, which are frequently made when flying with shallow, flapping wings

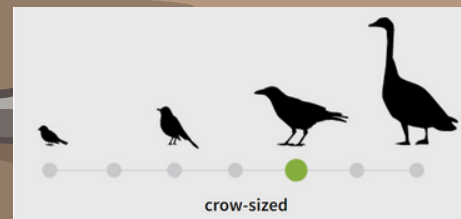
Habitat: Shorelines

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Probing

Conservation: Restricted Range



Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

Look for Western Meadowlarks foraging in low-growing fields, meadows, and open grasslands, as well as near marshes and road sides

They may be found in mixed flocks with other blackbirds and starlings during the winter

Males sing during the breeding season when perched atop fences and powerlines, as well as from the tops of shrubs and fence posts

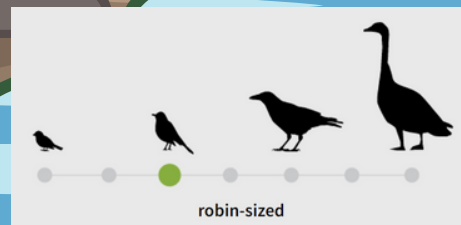
Habitat: Grasslands

Food: Insects

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Ground Forager

Conservation: Low Concern



Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)

Search in large areas with short vegetation, particularly around prairie dog settlements and ground squirrel colonies. They might also be using ditches and culverts

They are astonishingly small and well-camouflaged in comparison to the wide-open spaces where they inhabit. You'll need to carefully examine a potential habitat; pay close attention to the dirt mounds at burrow entrances, where owls frequently stand when not hunting, sometimes with only their head and eyes visible

The owls are generally more active in the early morning and late evening, so those are the best times to see them

Habitat: Grasslands

Food: Small Animals

Nesting: Burrow

Behavior: Ground Forager

Conservation: Low Concern



between robin and crow

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Whimbrels are rather big shorebirds that inhabit open tundra, beaches, and mudflats

In saltmarshes or on small islands, you can find them along the shore on a falling or newly low tide; as the tide rises, they go to high-tide roosts

For a heads-up that the birds are nearby, pay attention to their gentle, piping whistles

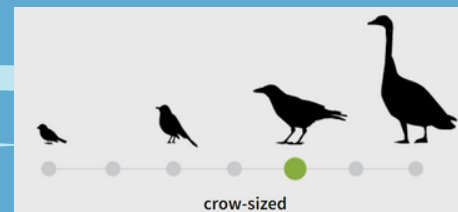
Habitat: Shorelines

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Ground Forager

Conservation: Declining



Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*)

When migrating in the spring and fall, Greater Yellowlegs seek shallow marshes and ephemeral mudflats like the majority of shorebirds

In times of drought, search for them in the shallow upper arms of reservoirs and lakes where nutrient-rich mud is exposed. (local weather is crucial) Look for them in flooded pastures during rainy weather where rain forms shallow pools

Greater Yellowlegs frequently wade in deeper water than other shorebird species within a particular marsh

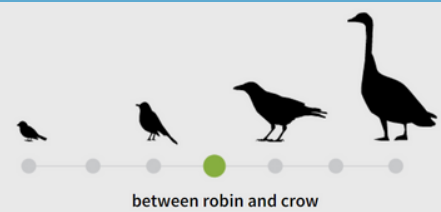
Habitat: Marshes

Food: Aquatic Invertebrates

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Probing

Conservation: Low Concern



Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Corthylio calendula*)

Ruby-crowned Kinglets are small, silent, and swiftly moving

One might dart into view when you're checking the roadside vegetation or keeping an eye on a group of warblers, zipping through the undergrowth almost too quickly for you to keep up

Watch for their distinctive tendency to flip their wings. This bird's ruby crown is frequently kept totally concealed

However, pay attention to both the loud song of the male (frequently produced during migration as well as during breeding season) and the double-noted call, which can be recognizable once you understand it

When this species is widespread and quite frequent over much of the U.S., search for it throughout the winter or while migrating

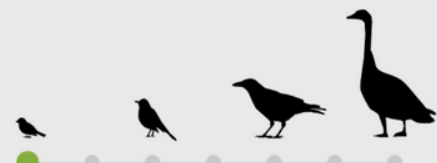
Habitat: Forests

Food: Insects

Nesting: Tree

Behavior: Foliage Gleaner

Conservation: Low Concern



sparrow-sized or smaller

Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)

Throughout their breeding habitat, Hooded Mergansers are fairly frequent on small ponds and streams

Go to unfrozen lakes or shallow, safe saltwater bays in the fall-spring to see them in flocks with other tiny divers like Bufflehead and Ruddy Ducks

Pay attention to flying ducks as well; a flurry of short whistles coming from the sky may indicate a merganser flying to work

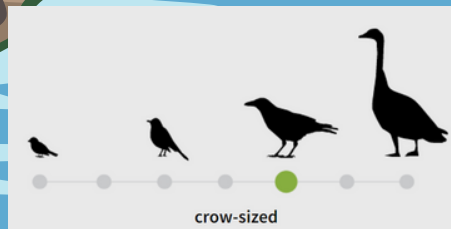
Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Fish

Nesting: Cavity

Behavior: Surface Dive

Conservation: Low Concern



American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

Finding them depends on where you are and what time of year it is. Don't limit your search for pelicans to the water's surface; instead, watch the skies

There may be vast flocks of these enormous birds soaring covertly quite high above. Although you can see them in considerable numbers in the Central Valley of California, the Salton Sea, and the Colorado River drainage of California and Arizona, they are most frequently found around shores in the winter

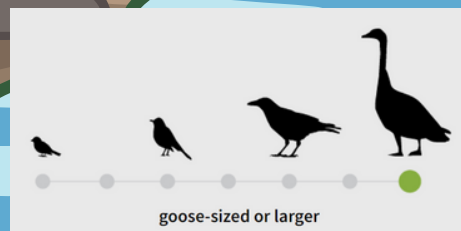
Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Fish

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Dabbler

Conservation: Low Concern



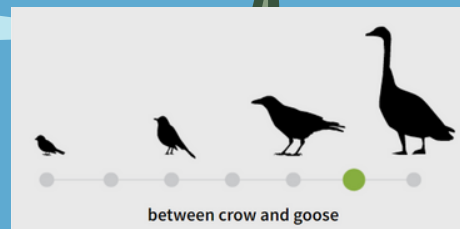
Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

Winter is the ideal season to see Common Goldeneyes in North America because they breed in the boreal forest

Although you can find goldeneyes in inland lakes, the majority of them spend the winter on protected coastal waters. They migrate slowly in the fall, frequently passing through when the lakes are starting to freeze

You may spot them from a surprising distance thanks to their brilliant yellow eyes and unusually shaped heads. Keep an eye on the birds since they may vanish suddenly as they dive for food, but they usually reappear after a minute or so

Habitat: Lakes and Ponds
Food: Aquatic Invertebrates
Nesting: Cavity
Behavior: Surface Dive
Conservation: Low Concern



Brant (*Branta bernicla*)

In the winter, keep an eye out for Brants in saltmarsh lagoon systems, bays, and sounds

When eelgrass beds are within reach, they eat most heavily during lower and falling tides

Brants have developed a habit of frequenting parks and golf courses that forbid hunting. In these areas, they might tolerate a relatively close approach; otherwise, they are quite wary of people

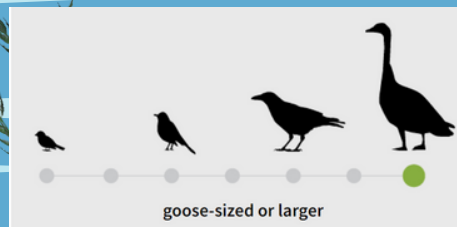
Habitat: Marshes

Food: Plants

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Ground Forager

Conservation: Restricted Range



Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

Head to the southern US shores (Atlantic, Gulf, or Pacific) and search for enormous birds gliding low over the water; use the gulls and cormorants in the area as a size reference

To eat, these birds dive into the water. From the corner of your eye, the enormous splashes they create may resemble a whale's spout. If you notice a splash, check for the pelican on the water's surface as it empties its neck pouch or keep an eye out for additional pelicans diving in the same area

If you can't see any pelicans over the water, try a jetty, mudflat, or estuary to see if there are any resting in groups

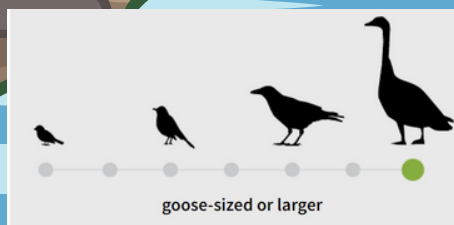
Habitat: Oceans

Food: Fish

Nesting: Tree

Behavior: Aerial Dive

Conservation: Low Concern



Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*)

Caspian Terns are not uncommon, however because of their localized occurrence, it can be useful to use eBird to find out when they might be close to you

They frequently roost with groups of gulls and other (smaller) terns and frequent rivers, lakes, and coastal beaches

Look for the large, vivid-red bill and keep an ear out for the unique call to locate them

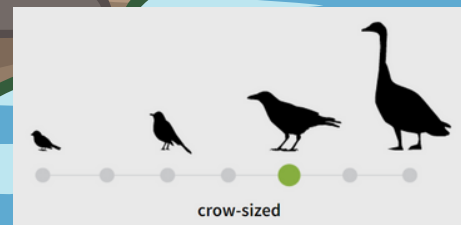
Habitat: Shorelines

Food: Fish

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Aerial Dive

Conservation: Low Concern



Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*)

All over North America, shorelines and streams are frequented by Belted Kingfishers

Before you see the kingfisher, you may hear a loud, rattling call

It has a striking silhouette because of its huge head and thick bill, which it uses to soar across the open space above the water as it patrols its territory

Additionally, they perch on telephone wires and branches around waterways. Be ready for the occasional unexpected flyover wherever you are birding because Belted Kingfishers also perform lengthy commuter flights over fields and forests far from water

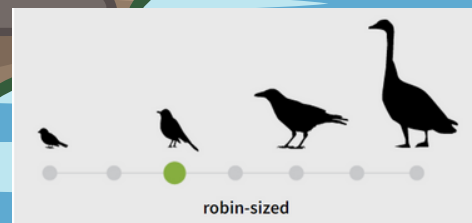
Habitat: Lakes and Ponds

Food: Fish

Nesting: Burrow

Behavior: Aerial Dive

Conservation: Low Concern



Sources

iNaturalist:

Albany Bulb

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/the-albany-bulb-observations?tab=observations>

MLK Jr. Regional Shoreline

https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?place_id=5565

Middle Harbour Shoreline Park

<https://www.inaturalist.org/places/middle-harbor-shoreline-park>

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology:

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/>

Birds-National Audubon Society:

<https://www.audubon.org/birds>

Birdcast:

<https://dashboard.birdcast.info/region/US-CA-001>