

Birds

AMERICAN PEREGRINE FALCON

Falco peregrinus anatum

Covered Species

Family Falconidae (Falcon Family)



Gerald & Buff Corsi/CalPhoto

Description: The American peregrine falcon is a medium-sized raptor, total length 41 - 51 cm (16 - 20 in.). Adults have a dark gray back and crown, dark bars or streaks on a pale chest and abdomen, and heavy malar (cheek) stripes on the face. Young birds, prior to first molt, are brownish above and underparts streaked vertically with brown. Nesting season from March to June; clutch size 3 - 4 eggs; incubation approximately 33 days; only 2 - 3 chicks hatch and fledge 42 days later.

Diet: Peregrines prey almost exclusively on medium-sized birds (pigeons, doves, ducks, swifts, and others), and occasionally on bats. It hunts for its food by diving after the prey and catching it mid-air.

Habitat: Peregrines inhabit mixed conifer, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, lowland riparian, and grassland habitats, as well as agricultural and urban areas. Nests are shallow hollows in soil, rock ledges, small caves on high cliffs, old raptor nests, or tree cavities. These falcons also are known to nest on various man-made structures within the Las Vegas Valley.

Range: Known throughout the southern half of North America. In Clark County, Nevada, known from the Spring Mountains, Desert National Wildlife Range, Logandale, Overton State Wildlife Management Area, and Newberry Mountains. Known to nest in the Black Mountains, Lake Mead area, and within the Las Vegas Valley area.

Special Remarks: The American peregrine falcon was removed from the Federal list of endangered species on August 25, 1999; the species will be monitored for at least 13 years.

ARIZONA BELL'S VIREO

Vireo bellii arizonae

Covered Species

Family Vireonidae (Vireo Family)



Rick & Nora Bowers/Bowers Photo

Description: The Arizona Bell's vireo is one of four subspecies of Bell's vireo. It is a small, 12 cm (4.75 in.) long neotropical migrant. Its plumage is generally drab gray to green above, white to yellow below, with a clear breast (no stripes). Bell's vireo has a faint white eye ring and two pale wing bars, with the lower bar more prominent. Nesting season from April to July; clutch size 3 – 5 eggs; incubation 14 days; chicks fledge 12 days after hatching. Bell's vireo nests are parasitized by brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*); in some areas parasitism may be over 50 percent.

Diet: Primarily feeds on insects and fruit.

Habitat: Inhabits desert riparian communities where it requires low, dense riparian areas along water or intermittent streams. Typical vegetation of willow (*Salix* sp.), cottonwood (*Populus* sp.), *Baccharis*, salt cedar (*Tamarix* sp.), or mesquite (*Prosopis* sp.). Nests in thickets of willows or other low shrubs.

Range: Bell's vireo occurs throughout the central and southwestern United States. The Arizona subspecies occurs along the Colorado River and in riparian and mesic habitats in southern Arizona. In Clark County, Nevada, the Arizona subspecies is a locally rare and declining summer resident along the Colorado, Virgin, and Muddy rivers, as well as at isolated springs.

BENDIRE'S THRASHER

Toxostoma bendirei

Family Mimidae (Mockingbird Family)

Evaluation Species



Description: Drab desert thrasher with long tail, 25 cm (9.7 in.) long. Plumage olive brown above, smoke gray below with faint but distinct streaked, triangular spots pointed upwards on breast and flanks. Eyes clear yellow, without orange tint as in curve-billed thrashers. Bill shorter than other thrasher species, lower mandible almost straight. Often cocks tail wren-like over back when running on ground. Nesting season from February to August; clutch size 3 - 4 eggs; incubation and fledging time unknown.

Diet: Believed to feed on beetles, caterpillars, and other insects while foraging on the ground.

Habitat: In brushy desert habitat, especially where open ground meets tall bushes and cholla cactus (*Opuntia* sp.). May inhabit elevations up to 1,980 m (6,500 ft). Nests generally built high above ground in cacti, desert thorn (*Lycium* sp.), mesquite (*Prosopis* sp.), and catclaw (*Acacia greggii*).

Range: Deserts of the Southwest. Known from southern Nevada, California, Arizona, and Mexico.

BLUE GROSBEAK

Passerina caerulea

Covered Species

Family Emberizidae (Finch Family)



Description: The blue grosbeak is a large finch-like bird, 15 - 19 cm (6 - 7.5 in.) long. Male birds are almost entirely a deep, rich blue color with two rusty or tan wingbars, and with a thick conical bill. Females are warm brown in color with two tan wingbars, and occasionally blue feathers on its upperparts. Nesting season from May to August; clutch size 2 - 5 eggs; incubation 11 days; chicks fledge 13 days after hatching.

Diet: Opportunistic feeders; diet consists of insects (grasshoppers, cicadas, beetles) but also snails, grass seeds, and fruit. Blue grosbeaks tend to forage in openings adjacent to their habitat.

Habitat: Primarily found in riparian habitats, in thickets of willow (*Salix* sp.), young cottonwood (*Populus* sp.), arrow weed (*Pluchea sericea*), mesquite (*Prosopis* sp.), and salt cedar (*Tamarix* sp.); also along watercourses, grasslands, and croplands.

Range: Southern United States and into Mexico. In Clark County, Nevada, this species is found along the Virgin River, Muddy River, and Colorado River system, and the Las Vegas Wash. Nest in Southern Nevada.

Comments: Until recently this species was known as *Guiraca caerulea*.

CRISSAL THRASHER

Toxostoma crissale

Family Mimidae (Mockingbird Family)

Evaluation Species



Herbert Clarke/Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Description: The Crissal thrasher is large and slender, 29 cm (11.5 in.) long. Plumage olive brown above, smoke gray below, with distinctive reddish undertail patch and dark whisker streak; eyes straw colored, and bill greatly decurved. Nesting season from February to July; clutch size 2 - 4 eggs; incubation 14 days; chicks fledge 11 - 12 days after hatching. Distinguished from curve-billed thrashers by its unspotted breast and reddish undertail patch.

Diet: Berries, insects, and small lizards.

Habitat: Dense brush along desert streams and mesquite thickets, willow (*Salix*), saltbush (*Atriplex*), and chaparral of mountains up to 1,800 m (6,000 ft). Secretive, hides in underbrush. Nests in branches of willow close to trunk and in mesquite.

Range: Southeast California to southern Nevada, Utah, south to Texas and Mexico. Year-round resident in Clark County, Nevada.

Comments: Formerly known as *Toxostoma dorsale*.

GRAY VIREO

Vireo vicinior

Family Viroendae (Vireo Family)

Evaluation Species



Rick & Nora Bowers/Vireo

Description: The gray vireo is about 14 cm (5.5 in.) long. Plumage plain, with gray back and white below; has narrow white eye-ring, dull white lores, long tail, and only one faint wingbar (not two as in other vireos). This species is the only vireo that flicks its tail as it forages in undergrowth. Nesting season from April to June; clutch size 3 - 5 eggs; incubation and fledging time unknown. Gray vireo nests are parasitized by brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*).

Diet: Gray vireos feed mostly on insects.

Habitat: In dry brush of arid mountains and mesas, chaparral, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, and mesquite communities, usually hidden in shrubs. Nests hang from twigs or forks of tree or brush.

Range: Southwestern United States to central Mexico. Summer resident and breeding in Clark County, Nevada.

LE CONTE'S THRASHER

Toxostoma lecontei

Family Mimidae (Mockingbird Family)

Evaluation Species



Montie Taylor

Description: The Le Conte's thrasher is a slim dull-colored bird, 28 cm (11 in.) long. It has the palest plumage of all the curve-billed thrashers. Upperparts light gray-brown except tail portion dusky or black; underparts very light gray to white, underside of tail yellowish buff; bill slender black and downcurved; eyes brown. Nesting season from February to June; clutch size 2 - 4 eggs; incubation and fledging time unknown.

Diet: Unknown, thought to feed on insects (arthropods).

Habitat: In dense growth of saltbush (*Atriplex* sp.), often in lowest and most barren desert plains. Runs across open desert or in sandy washes. Nests in densest thicket of cholla cactus (*Opuntia* sp.), also in saltbush, and other dense shrubs depending on the location.

Range: In desert plains of the Southwest, uncommon over most of its range. Occurs in California, Nevada, and Arizona. In Clark County, Nevada, this species is a year-round resident in suitable habitat.

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE

Lanius ludovicianus

Family Laniidae (Shrike Family)

Evaluation Species



Description: The loggerhead shrike is 23 cm (9 in.) long. Head and back bluish gray, underparts white and very faintly barred (striped). Broad black mask extends above eye and thinly across top of the all-dark bill. Wings black with white patch; tail slim, black, with white outer tail feathers. Nesting season from March to June; clutch size 4 - 7 eggs; incubation 10 - 12 days; chicks fledge about 20 days after hatching. Loggerhead shrike is slightly smaller and darker in color than northern shrike (*Lanius excubitor*), which is a rare winter visitor in Southern Nevada.

Diet: Variety of foods depending on availability, from mice to birds and insects.

Habitat: Open country, washes, thinly wooded or shrubby lands, pastures, thickets, hedges, and barbed-wire fences along roads.

Range: Southern Canada to southern Mexico. Year-round resident in Clark County, Nevada.

PHAINOPEPLA

Phainopepla nitens

Covered Species

Family Ptilonotidae (Silky Flycatcher Family)



Description: The phainopepla is the only member of the silky flycatcher family in North America; its size is 18 - 19 cm (7 - 7.75 in.) long. The male is a glossy black color with bright white wing patches, long tail, prominent crest on the head, and red irises. The female is gray in color with off-white wing patches. Nesting season from February to July; clutch size 2, sometimes 3; incubation 14 days; chicks fledge 18 - 20 days after hatching.

Diet: Feeds primarily on fruit (frugivorous), specifically desert mistletoe (*Phoradendron californicum*) that parasitizes members of the legume family. During the breeding season, *Phainopepla* also feeds on insects such as grasshoppers, flies, and beetles.

Habitat: This species is highly dependent on mistletoe-infected mesquite and catclaw associations. Found in major riparian areas with mesquite (*Prosopis* sp.) and catclaw (*Acacia greggii*). Also in pinyon-juniper habitat infected with mistletoe. Populations have declined in the Las Vegas Valley with the loss of mesquite woodlands due to urbanization.

Range: Southwestern desert endemic. In Clark County, Nevada, known to occur in the Spring Mountains (Trout Canyon, Pine Creek), Lake Mead National Recreation Area, the Las Vegas Valley, and Meadow Valley Wash. Breeds in washes throughout Piute and Eldorado valleys in extreme southern Clark County, Nevada.

SOUTHWESTERN WILLOW FLYCATCHER

Empidonax traillii extimus
Family Tyrannidae (Tyrant Family)

Covered Species



Mike Hoptak/Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Description: The southwestern willow flycatcher is a small neotropical migrant, about 15 cm (5.9 in.) in length. It is one of four subspecies of willow flycatchers, which are difficult to distinguish in the field. Colors of this species are grayish-green on the back and wings, whitish throat, light gray-olive breast, and pale yellowish belly. Two wingbars are visible; eye-ring faint or absent. Upper mandible dark, lower mandible light. Nesting season from May to July; clutch size 3 - 4 eggs; incubation 12 days; chicks fledge 13 days after hatching.

Diet: Insectivore; forages within and occasionally above dense riparian vegetation, taking insects on the wing or from leaves.

Habitat: Restricted to desert riparian habitats along rivers, streams, or wetlands. This species prefers areas with large willow (*Salix*), cottonwood (*Populus*), and *Baccharis*, but will use salt cedar (*Tamarix*) and arrow weed (*Pluchea sericea*). Breeds in thickets of trees and shrubs 4 - 7 m (to 23 ft.) tall with high percentage of canopy cover and dense foliage, near or adjacent to surface water.

Range: Southern Nevada, and other southwestern states. In Clark County, Nevada, known to occur in the Virgin River and Muddy River areas. Other riverine areas with potential habitat include Meadow Valley Wash, Las Vegas Wash, and the Colorado River mainstem.

Special Remarks: Federally listed as Endangered on February 27, 1995.

SUMMER TANAGER

Piranga rubra

Covered Species

Family Thraupidae (Tanager Family)



Description: Summer tanagers are large neotropical migratory songbirds 20 cm (7.75 in.) long. Adult male birds have red to red-orange plumage; female plumage is brownish to orange-yellow. Nesting season from May to August; clutch size 3 - 4 eggs; incubation about 12 days; chicks fledge 8 - 10 days after hatching. Nests are known to be susceptible to parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*).

Diet: Noted for its consumption of bees and wasps, but also eats a variety of other insects and fruit.

Habitat: Found in desert riparian habitat, particularly mature riparian habitat favoring cottonwood-willow associations along streams and springs.

Range: Known to occur throughout the southwestern deserts into Mexico. In Clark County, Nevada, this species is an uncommon summer resident at the edge of its range. Observed at Pine Creek (Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area), Corn Creek Spring, Las Vegas Wash, and Wheeler Camp Spring near Blue Diamond. Also in Moapa Valley (Warm Springs area), and Meadow Valley Wash.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER

Pyrocephalus rubinus

Family Tyrannidae (Tyrant Family)

Covered Species



Description: A smaller flycatcher, about 15 cm (6 in.) long. Plumage of male birds dark dusky to black on upperparts and tail, and brilliant vermilion on underparts and crown. Females dusky on upperparts, white on breasts with dusky streaks, belly and undertail coverts salmon or pink. Nesting season from March or April through July; clutch size 2 - 4 eggs, usually three; incubation 14 - 15 days; chicks fledge 14 - 16 days after hatching. Fall migration begins in September; some birds overwinter in the Moapa Valley and Las Vegas Valley. Nest parasitism is thought to be rare throughout its range, but has commonly been observed at sites in southern Nevada (Longshore 2000, personal communication).

Diet: Vermilion flycatchers are insectivorous birds, darting out from a perch to snap up flying insects and bees, often near a water source.

Habitat: Desert riparian habitat consisting of cottonwood (*Populus* sp.), willows (*Salix* sp.), and other trees. May also be found in mesquite and catclaw habitats adjacent to irrigated fields, ditches, and pastures. Winter resident in desert scrub, summer resident in riparian areas.

Range: Southwestern deserts into Mexico. Breeds from southern California, southern Nevada, central Arizona, and central New Mexico south to South America. In Clark County, Nevada, known to occur along the Colorado River, Virgin River, Muddy River, and desert oases.

WESTERN BLUEBIRD

Sialia mexicana

Family Muscicapidae (Thrushes Family)

Evaluation Species



Sally Mills

Description: Western bluebirds are 18 cm (7 in.) long. Upperparts and throat of males deep purple-blue; breast, sides, and flanks chestnut; belly and undertail coverts grayish. Females duller, brownish-gray above, breast and flanks tinged with chestnut brown, throat pale gray. Often darts into air from high perch to catch insects in flight or flutters from low perch. Nesting season from April to May; clutch size 3 - 8 eggs (common 4 - 6 eggs); incubation and fledging time unknown.

Diet: Mostly insects, ants, spiders, earthworms, snails, and mistletoe berries.

Habitat: In open woodlands and farmlands, in desert areas found in mesquite-mistletoe associations. Nests in natural cavity of trees and posts, in abandoned nests from woodpeckers, and also in nest boxes. Commonly observed in lower elevations during the winter, but probably breeds at higher elevations in summer.

Range: Known from Canada to Baja California. While not widely distributed, this species is a year-round resident in suitable habitat in Clark County, Nevada.

WESTERN BURROWING OWL

Athene cunicularia hypugea

Family Strigidae (Owl Family)

Evaluation Species



Aaron Ambros

Description: Small brown ground-dwelling owl, 23 - 28 cm (9 - 11 in.) long. Legs long, tail short and stubby, and chin with white stripe. Often seen in daytime standing next to burrow or perching on fence posts. Bobs up and down when agitated. Nesting season from March to July; clutch size 7 - 9 eggs; incubation 28 days; fledging time unknown.

Diet: Feeds mostly on insects and rodents, occasionally small birds and reptiles; hunts mostly in early evening.

Habitat: Yearlong resident in open, dry Mojave desert scrub, sagebrush, and open areas in pinyon-juniper and mixed conifer communities. Nesting often in colonies in abandoned burrows, which owls enlarge and modify. Also found in urbanized areas, but sightings have decreased in recent years. Many owls from northern areas winter in the Mojave Desert areas of Southern Nevada.

Range: Occurs throughout the State of Nevada, western and Midwestern United States, Central America, and South America.

Comments: Older texts use *Speotyto cunicularia hypugaea*.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO

Coccyzus americanus

Family Cuculidae (Cuckoo Family)

Covered Species



J. Schumacher/Vireo

Description: The yellow-billed cuckoo is a neotropical migratory bird, 28 - 32 cm (11 - 12.5 in.) long. Tail slender and long; upperparts grayish brown, glossed with olive; underparts dull, white, shaded with pale bluish gray or buff; wing patches large and rufous; lower mandible yellow with a black tip. Six large white spots mark the underside of the long graduated tail. Females slightly larger than males, but essentially look the same. Nesting season from June to August; clutch size 1 - 5 eggs; incubation 9 - 11 days; chicks fledged 7 - 9 days after hatching.

Diet: Feeds on large insects such as grasshoppers, caterpillars, crickets, cicadas.

Habitat: Associated with desert riparian habitats in mature cottonwood/willow associations close to moving water courses. Inhabits densely foliated, deciduous riparian thickets and shrubs containing willow (*Salix*), but also mesquite (*Prosopis*).

Range: Occurs throughout much of the United States. In Clark County, Nevada, may be found along the Virgin, Muddy, and Colorado rivers, and in the Las Vegas Wash.

WATCH LIST SPECIES

Green heron	<i>Butorides viriscens</i>
Western least bittern	<i>Ixobrychus exilis hesperis</i>
White-faced ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>
Yuma clapper rail	<i>Rallus longirostris yumanensis</i>
Northern goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
Flammulated owl	<i>Otus flammeolus</i>
Northern saw-whet owl	<i>Aegolius acadicus</i>
Northern pygmy owl	<i>Glaucidium gnoma</i>
Western screech owl	<i>Megascops kennicottii</i>
Cactus wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>
Canyon wren	<i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>
Scott's oriole	<i>Icterus parisorum</i>