

BIRDS OF BOULDER COUNTY

Birds are found on all Boulder County Parks and Open Space properties,
in all life zones, and in all seasons.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BIRDS

- Birds are warm-blooded vertebrates (Endothermic).
- Birds are distinguished from all other animals by their feathers.
- The skeleton of a bird is modified for flight – bones are light; vertebrae, pelvic and shoulder girdles are fused into a strong, light body case, and a keeled sternum anchors muscles to give power for flight.

CLASSIFICATION OF BIRDS

Birds are classified in a manner similar to all other living organisms using a system called **binomial nomenclature**, which was established by a Swedish naturalist, Carolus Linnaeus early in the 18th Century. Birds are classified into **phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species**. These taxa form a hierarchy for birds as follows:

Kingdom	ANIMALIA	Phylum	CHORDATA	Class	AVES
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The **Orders** of the birds commonly found in Boulder County are listed below*:

Anseriformes	Waterfowl – Ducks, Geese, Swans
Galliformes	Quails, Pheasants, Grouse, Turkeys
Podicipediformes	Grebes
Columbiformes	Pigeons, Doves
Caprimulgiformes	Nighthawks
Apodiformes	Swifts, Hummingbirds
Gruiformes	Rails, Coots
Charadriiformes	Shorebirds, Gulls, Terns, Plovers, Snipes
Gaviiformes	Loons
Pelecaniformes	Pelicans, Herons, Egrets, Bitterns, Ibis
Cathartiformes	Vultures
Accipitriformes	Hawks, Eagles, Osprey
Strigiformes	Owls
Coraciiformes	Kingfishers
Piciformes	Woodpeckers, Sapsuckers, Flickers
Falconiformes	Falcons
Passeriformes	Perching Birds – Flycatchers, Vireos, Jays, Crows, Magpies, Ravens, Swallows, Wrens, Dippers, Warblers, Thrushes, Starlings, Juncos, Grosbeaks, Blackbirds, Meadowlarks, Cowbirds, Grackles, Orioles, Finches, Shrikes, and others

*[NOTE: *Scientific classification changes over time as new research reveals more accurate information*]

For our purposes, let's keep it simple. Birds belong to the Class **AVES** and each bird is identified by two Latin names, the first identifying the **genus** and the second the **species**.
[More detailed information can be found in bird field guides and on many bird websites]

BIRD ADAPTATIONS

Birds have adapted to their environment in many ways that help them to be more successful in breeding and caring for their young and in keeping themselves healthy and well fed. Physical adaptations include differences in bills, wings, tails, feet, tongues, and color. Behavioral changes include feeding (diurnal-daytime *or* nocturnal-nighttime), preening (keeping feathers oiled, dust baths, feigning injury (like the Killdeer), various foraging strategies, and migration.

BIRD MIGRATION

Many familiar bird species return to Boulder County in the spring from their wintering grounds. These same species disappear in the fall at the end of the breeding season. Seasonal migration enables birds to avoid the physical stresses of unfavorable climates and to use food supplies that are available for only limited periods each year. Seasonal migration presumably evolved to increase lifetime reproductive output. It permits birds to use areas that are either more productive or which provide less competition than the wintering grounds. Also, daylight periods in spring and summer are longer in the north, giving birds more hours per day to gather food.

Preparation for migration involves both physical and behavioral changes. Physical preparation includes the accumulation of fat to provide fuel for prolonged flight. Commonly, passerine birds (perching, song birds) lose one-fourth to one-half of their body weight during overwater migration. In anticipation of this, many birds nearly double their weight before migration. Changes in behavior are especially prominent in nocturnal migrants. Many change their behavior during darkness and begin to face and flutter in the direction that they will soon be flying.

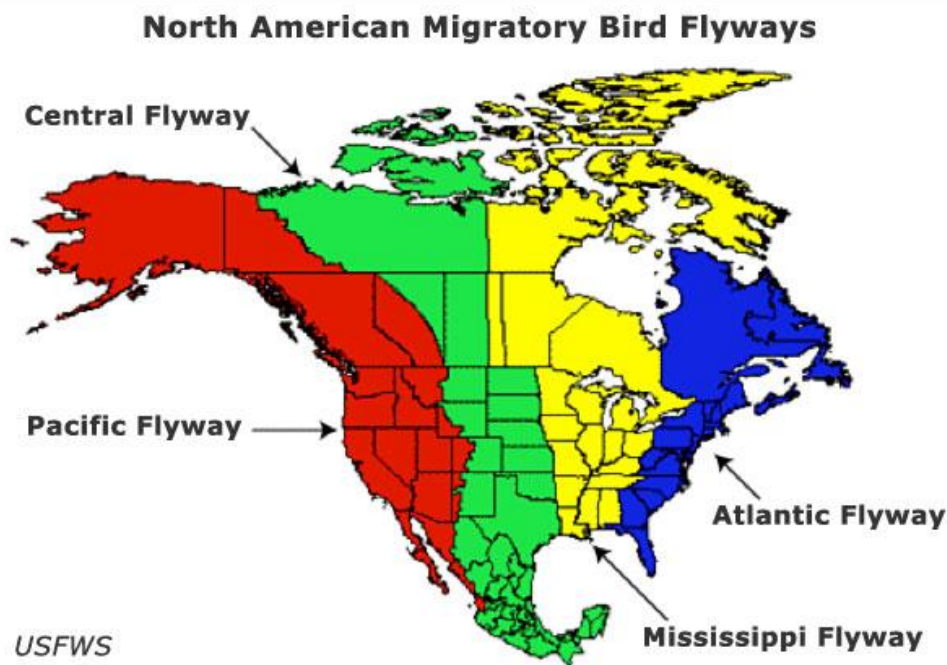
Most birds fly below 500 feet, except during migration. There is no reason to expend the energy to go higher. There also may be dangers, such as exposure to higher winds or to the sharp vision of hawks. When migrating, however, birds often climb to relatively great heights, possibly to avoid dehydration in the warmer air near the ground. Ninety-five percent of the migratory movements occur at less than 10,000 feet, and the bulk of the movements occur less than 3,000 feet. However, birds can and do fly well over 15,000 feet without apparent ill effects.

Long distance migrants usually start at or about 5,000 feet and then progressively climb to around 20,000 feet. Like jet aircraft, the optimum cruise altitude of bird migrants increases as their 'fuel' is used up and their weight declines. One of the most impressive altitude records is that of a flock of Whooper Swans that was seen on radar arriving over Northern Ireland on migration and was visually identified by an airline pilot at 29,000 feet. Bar-headed geese are the highest-flying migratory birds, regularly reaching altitudes of up to five and a half miles above sea level while flying over the highest peaks in the Himalayas (29,000+ feet). The Arctic Tern has the longest migration of any bird, flying more than 49,700 miles in a year while making a round trip between their breeding grounds in the Arctic and the Antarctic, where they spend their winters.

Although more than 20 million shorebirds migrate through the U.S. to the Arctic each year, the long term survival of even abundant species may be in jeopardy. Migratory shorebirds depend on habitat in at least three areas: breeding, nonbreeding, and migratory stopover sites. Studies show that many species form enormous concentrations at several key staging areas along their migration routes. Each of these spots is critical for the successful migration of these species and provides super abundant food resources. These enable the birds to replenish their energy reserves quickly and continue their migration.

In North America, five such critical sites support millions of birds annually. These are: Alaska - Copper River Delta, Washington - Grays Harbor, eastern Canada - Bay of Fundy, Kansas - Cheyenne Bottoms, and the beaches of Delaware Bay in New Jersey and Delaware. More than 80% of the entire North American population of some species may join ranks at any of these key locations. Other vital locations, such as the Platte River in Nebraska (for Sandhill and Whooping Cranes) have been identified throughout the Americas. These few, critical staging areas underpin the entire migration system of new world migrating birds.

However, most important migratory stopovers are nutrient-rich habitats, like estuaries, that also provide resources desirable to humans, making them vulnerable to alteration, pollution, disturbance, and destruction. Today, many of these areas are threatened by dams and the allocation of water away from in-stream flows to urban and agricultural use. Similar problems exist for water birds regarding prairie potholes and other stopover and breeding lakes and ponds. Drainage of critical wetlands threatens many of these areas.



Migration in North America is essentially north-south along four principal routes or flyways: Pacific, Central, Mississippi and Atlantic. About 150 species of land and freshwater birds that breed in our region winter to the south in Central and South America and the West Indies.

How do birds navigate over thousands of miles to find their way between breeding and wintering sites? How do birds find their way back to precise nesting or roosting sites (homing behavior)? To do either, birds must be able to orient, that is to determine compass direction, and to navigate, judge their position while traveling. The short explanation of these complex phenomena is that birds find their way by using a variety of cues. Different species may use these cues in different orders of priority, and some cues may always be used instead of others. Birds acquire directional information from five primary sources: 1) topographic features, including wind direction that can be influenced by major land forms, 2) stars, 3) sun, 4) Earth's magnetic field, and 5) odors.

Migrating waterfowl and shorebirds can be found on BCPOS properties with lakes and ponds. (*Pella Crossing, Boulder County Fairgrounds, Lagerman Agricultural Preserve, Twin Lakes, Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat, Carolyn Holmberg Preserve, and Dodd Lake*). Although there are both spring and fall migrations, the best time to identify migrating waterfowl is in the spring when males are in their breeding plumage. Migrating passerine (song) birds can also be observed on BCPOS properties (*Hall Ranch, Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain, Heil Valley Ranch, Coalton Trailhead, Bald Mountain Scenic Area, Walden Ponds, Betasso Preserve, Legion Park, Caribou Ranch, Mud Lake, Walker Ranch, and Anne U. White*).

BOULDER COUNTY BIRDS

Five life zones in Boulder County provide a wide diversity of habitat for birds. Over 300 species have been recorded in Boulder County and many birds are more likely found in specific habitats throughout the county.

Five life zones in Boulder County:

Plains (5,000 – 6,000 ft.)

- *The eastern third of Boulder County - climate is dry and sunny with some wetlands (riparian zones) along creeks and many lakes/ponds. (e.g. Agricultural Heritage Center, Rabbit Mountain, Pella Crossing, Lagerman Reservoir, Walden/Sawhill Ponds, and Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm)*

Foothills (6,000 – 8,000 ft.)

- *Climate still relatively dry; terrain is varied with rock outcrops and river canyons (e.g. Hall Ranch, Heil Valley Ranch, Bald Mountain, and Betasso Preserve)*

Montane (8,000-10,000 feet)

- *Variety of ecosystems, including coniferous and aspen forests, open dry meadows, and willow shrub wetlands (e.g. Mud Lake and Caribou Ranch, Walker Ranch)*

Subalpine (10,000-11,500 feet)

- *Highest forested life zone; dominated by Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir trees, with glaciated valleys, scattered open meadows and scrub wetlands of willows and bog birch.*

Alpine (above 11,500 feet)

- *Short summer, brutal winter; survival here depends on adaptation to the extreme conditions*

List of BCPOS Properties, life zone, and *some* common birds in each area
[NOTE: *There are many exceptions to the following list of birds found in each life zone*]

PLAINS

BCPOS Properties (BCPOS map #):

B – Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain
D – Colton Trailhead
E – Pella Crossing (*ponds*)
F – Boulder County Fairgrounds (*stream*)
G – Lagerman Agricultural Preserve (*lake*)
H – Twin Lakes (*ponds*)
J – Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat (*ponds*)
L – Legion Park (*Valmont Reservoir – requires scope*)
P – Flagg Park
Q – Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm (*lake*)
S – Dodd Lake (*lake*)
T – Harney Lastoka
Agricultural Heritage Center

Some Possible Birds (* more detailed information on these species is in the notes):

American Crows	Golden Eagles*
American Goldfinches	Great-horned Owls*
American Kestrels*	House Finches*
American Robins*	House Sparrows
Bald Eagles*	House Wrens (<i>summer</i>)
Black-billed Magpies*	Mourning Doves
Blue Jays	Northern Flickers, red-shafted*
Brown-headed Cowbirds	Red-tailed Hawks*
Bullock's orioles (<i>summer</i>)	Sharp-shinned Hawks*
Common Raven*	Song Sparrows
Cooper's Hawks	Swainson's Hawks (<i>summer</i>)
Eurasian collared Doves	Turkey Vultures (<i>summer</i>)
European Starlings	Western Meadowlarks*

PLAINS WETLANDS

Barn Swallows (<i>summer</i>)	Yellow-headed Blackbirds
Belted Kingfishers	(<i>summer</i>)
Canada Geese*	American White Pelicans (<i>summer</i>)
Killdeer (<i>summer</i>)*	Osprey (<i>summer</i>)
Mallards*	Common Yellowthroats (<i>summer</i>)*
Great Blue Herons*	Song Sparrows*
Red-winged Blackbirds*	American Tree Sparrows (<i>winter</i>)

Some Migrating Wetland Birds:

Ducks:

American Wigeon
Blue-winged Teal
Bufflehead
Cinnamon Teal
Common Goldeneye
Common Merganser
Greater Scaup
Green-winged Teal
Hooded Merganser
Lesser Scaup
Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
Northern Shoveler*
Northern Pintail

Grebes:

Clark's Grebe
Eared Grebe

Horned Grebe
Pied-billed Grebe
Western Grebe

Bitterns, Herons, Ibis:

American Bittern
Black-crowned Night Heron
Great Egret
Green Heron
Snowy Egret
White-faced Ibis

Shorebirds:

American Avocet*
Black-necked Stilts
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs
Spotted Sandpiper



Snowy Egret - www.audubon.org

FOOTHILLS and MONTANE

BCPOS Properties (BCPOS map #):

A – Hall Ranch
C – Heil Valley Ranch (*stream*)
I – Bald Mountain Scenic Area
K – Betasso Preserve
M – Caribou Ranch (*wetland*)
N – Mud Lake (*ponds*)
O – Walker Ranch
R – Anne U. White (closed?) (*stream*)

Some Possible Birds:

American Dippers*
Black-capped Chickadees*
Blue-gray Gnatcatchers
Broad-tailed Hummingbirds*
(*summer*)
Brown Creepers
Brown Thrashers
Bushtits
Canyon Wrens
Clark's Nutcrackers
Dark-eyed Juncos*
Downy Woodpeckers
Evening Grosbeaks
Goshawks
Gray Catbirds
Gray Jays

Hairy Woodpeckers
Mountain Bluebirds
Mountain Chickadees
Northern Flicker*
Pygmy Nuthatches
Red-breasted Nuthatches
Rock Wrens
Ruby-crowned Kinglets
Spotted Towhee*
Steller's Jays*
Violet Green Swallow*
Townsend's Solitaires
Western Bluebirds
Western Tanagers
White-breasted Nuthatches*
White-crowned Sparrows*
Wild Turkeys

SUBALPINE and ALPINE

Some Possible Birds:

American Dipper*
American Pipit
Boreal Owl
Clark's Nutcracker
Common Raven*
Dark-eyed Junco*
Dusky Grouse
Gray Jay
Great Horned Owl*
Hairy Woodpecker
Hammond's Flycatcher

Mountain Chickadee
Steller's Jay*
Northern Goshawk
Northern Pygmy Owl
Pine Siskin
Pine Grosbeak
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Red Crossbill
Townsend's solitaire
White-crowned Sparrow*
White-tailed Ptarmigan

DESCRIPTIONS OF COMMON BOULDER COUNTY BIRDS

The following pages contain information regarding *some* of the birds commonly seen on Boulder County Parks and Open Space properties. The list is by no means inclusive and can be added to by other volunteer naturalists in the future. For additional information on these birds, consult a good field guide. *The Birder's Handbook*, by Ehrlich, Dobkin, and Wheye provides much more comprehensive descriptions of bird breeding, feeding behavior, habitat, and migration than can be included here. Raptors, particularly the *buteos*, are extremely variable in coloration. To aid in their identification, a specialized field guide, such as *Hawks, Peterson Field Guide*, by Clark and Wheeler, can be extremely helpful.

[**NOTE:** *The drawings in this list of birds are illustrated by David Allen Sibley and found at www.audubon.org].*

List of Birds:

1. Great Blue Heron
2. Canada Goose
3. Mallard
4. Northern Shoveler
5. Golden Eagle
6. Sharp-shinned Hawk
7. Red-tailed Hawk
8. American Kestrel
9. Killdeer
10. American Avocet
11. Great Horned Owl
12. Broad-tailed Hummingbird
13. Northern Flicker
14. Steller's Jay
15. Black-billed Magpie
16. Common Raven
17. Violet-green Swallow
18. Black-capped Chickadee
19. White-breasted Nuthatch
20. American Dipper
21. American Robin
22. Common Yellowthroat
23. Spotted Towhee
24. Song Sparrow
25. White-crowned Sparrow
26. Dark-eyed Junco
27. Western Meadowlark
28. Red-winged Blackbird
29. House Finch
30. American Goldfinch

NAME:Common: **Great Blue Heron**Scientific: *Ardea Herodias***SIZE:** L 46" (117 cm) W 72" (183 cm)www.audubon.org**RANGE:**

Southern Canada to Mexico. Winters from central United States to northern South America, also western U.S. and Canada and southern Alaska.

HABITAT:

Freshwater and brackish marshes, swamps, lakes, rivers, mangroves.

DIET:

Mostly fish, but opportunistic, including human food scraps, nestlings, small mammals. Young are fed fish.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – typically from 30 to 70 feet high in trees; large, flat, well-made of interwoven sticks, lined with twigs and leaves. Repaired nests often lined with green needles. They nest in colonies, which vary in size, occasionally solitary. In mixed colonies, Great Blue Herons nest higher. Three to five light bluish-green eggs hatch in 28 days and the nestlings fledge in 56 to 60 days.

ADAPTATIONS:

Long legs, long neck, dagger-like bill.

VOICE:

Deep harsh croaks, *Frahnk, frahnk, frahnk*.

DID YOU KNOW?

As in most herons, foraging success improves with age. Adults are 2X as successful as young, which expend far more energy in foraging. There is a nesting colony in Boulder County along Crane Hollow Road, south of Hygiene and west of 75th Street.

NAME:

Common: **Canada Goose**
Scientific: *Branta canadensis*

SIZE: L 25"-45" (64 cm-114 cm)



www.audubon.org

RANGE:

Alaska, Canada, Northern United States. Winters from central United States to northern Mexico.

HABITAT:

Lakes, ponds, bays, marshes, fields. Flocks often found in urban parks with lakes or rivers.

DIET:

Shoots, roots, and seeds of grass and sedges, bulbs, grain, and berries; also insects, crustaceans, mollusks. Eats mostly grain and foliage in the winter.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – usually near water, made of dry grass, forbs, moss, sticks, aquatic vegetation, etc. Feathers, down added as incubation begins. Occasionally use abandoned nest, especially if ground is snow-covered; occasionally human-made structure. Four to seven white eggs hatch in 25-30 days and the nestlings fledge in 40 to 73 days. Breeding usually occurs in the third year, occasionally in the second year. Long term pair bond and strong fidelity to nesting territory.

VOICE:

Deep, musical honking, *ka-ronk* or *ka-lunk*.

DID YOU KNOW?

The most widespread goose. Flocks travel in strings or in 'V's,' honking loudly. Great variations in size and neck length between populations, from short-necked, Mallard-size 'Cackling' Geese, to long-necked, almost swan-size birds. Sentinels constantly guard foraging flocks. Breeding programs have produced expanding populations south of previous range and along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

NAME:

Common: **Mallard**
Scientific: *Anas platyrhynchos*



www.audubon.org

SIZE: L 23" (58 cm)

RANGE:

Northern parts of northern hemisphere, as far south as central Mexico in the western hemisphere. Winters south to Mexico, North Africa, India.

HABITAT:

Marshes, wooded swamps, grain fields, ponds, rivers, lakes, bays, and city parks.

DIET:

Seeds and shoots of sedge, grass, and aquatic vegetation, grain, acorns; insects and aquatic invertebrates. Forages in water by dabbling, submerging head and neck, up-ending; forages on land by grazing, plucking seeds, grubbing for roots.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – usually near water; made of cattails, reeds, and grass; concealed by vegetation. Occasionally in hollow logs, abandoned nests, at tree base, or human-made structures. Down-lined as clutch is completed. Pairs form in fall and winter. Seven to ten greenish-buff/grayish-buff/whitish eggs hatch in 26 to 30 days. Nestlings fledge in 52 to 60 days. Mallards are seasonally monogamous, switching mates each year. Male deserts after first week of incubation to join male flocks.

ADAPTATIONS:

Same as other ducks and geese – webbed feet, oil gland, bill adapted for diet.

VOICE:

Male call, *yeeb*; a low *kwek*; female, boisterous quacking.

DID YOU KNOW?

During molt, female is flightless for 32 days; male, 34 days. There is a decrease in flight muscles, an increase in leg muscles, and an added layer of insulating fat. Laying females may eat 2X more animal food than males or non-laying females.

NAME:

Common: **Northern Shoveler**
Scientific: *Anas clypeata*



www.audubon.org

SIZE: L 19" (48 cm)

RANGE:

Inhabits wetlands across much of North America. It breeds in wide areas across Eurasia, western North America and the Great Lakes region of the United States. In North America it winters south of a line from Washington to Idaho and from New Mexico east to Kentucky, also along the Eastern Seaboard as far north as Massachusetts, and throughout Mexico and Central America.

HABITAT:

This is a bird of open wetlands, such as wet grassland or marshes with some emergent vegetation.

DIET:

Varies with season and habitat. In winter, eats mostly seeds and other parts of aquatic plants, such as sedges, pondweeds, grasses, and others. In summer, eats mollusks, insects, crustaceans, and sometimes small fish. Forages mainly by swimming slowly forward with the bill skimming the surface or with the head partly submerged, often swinging the bill from side to side.

REPRODUCTION:

Pair formation begins in winter and continues during spring migration. Male remains with female longer than in most ducks, often through part of incubation period. Nest – built by female, is a shallow depression partly filled with dried grasses and weeds, lined with down; usually close to water, generally in area of short grass. Eggs – 9-12 with shades of pale olive. Incubation of 21-27 days is by female only. Within a few hours of hatching, female leads nestlings to water. Young are capable of flight ~52-60 days after hatching.

ADAPTATIONS:

Its elongated, spoon-shaped bill has comb-like projections along its edges, which filter out food from the water.

VOICE:

Male call, *chuxa* or *chux*; female, a low *chuck-ka*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Migrates in flocks. Migratory period is quite prolonged in both spring and fall, with many birds moving late in spring and early in fall.

NAME:

Common: **Golden Eagle**
Scientific: *Aquila chrysaetos*

SIZE: L 30-40" (76-102 cm) W 80-88" (203-224 cm)



www.audubon.org

RANGE:

Widely distributed worldwide. In North America, its range extends from northern Alaska, south through Canada and the United States to central Mexico. Found throughout much of the mountains terrain of the western United States.

HABITAT:

Prefers wild, usually open country in the mountains, foothills, canyons, and plains. Resident from the plains to Arctic alpine zones. Does not migrate but stays basically in one locale. Nests locally on cliffs and ledges of the foothill and montane life zones. Uses cliffs, crags, and promontories for both nesting and vantage points from which to watch for prey. Nests are large, ranging from six to eight feet across with a shallow interior. They are lined with grass, leaves, feathers or moss and are often located on a ledge high above ground, but below the upper rim of cliffs or buttes. Occasionally nests in trees.

DIET:

Eats small, and sometimes large, mammals, snakes, birds, and carrion – mainly prairie dogs in this area. As their natural food sources diminish, they are forced to take other prey. Hunts from perches and on the wing. When prey is spotted, stoops rapidly and directly.

REPRODUCTION:

Lives 25-30 years in the wild. Males and females mate for life unless the death of one causes them to re-mate. Often returns year after year to the same nest site. In Colorado the reconstruction of the nest begins in December and early January and egg laying starts in late February or the first week of March. Two eggs, whitish with shades of brown (~2.9 in. long). Eggs hatch in 43-45 days and young fledge 66-75 days after hatching.

VOICE:

Voice, seldom heard, is a yelping bark, *kya*; also whistled notes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Frequents the same breeding and hunting grounds, protecting a territory of about 36 square miles. Usually perches alone on a rock or tree for long periods of time.

NAME:Common: **Sharp-shinned Hawk**Scientific: *Accipiter striatus***SIZE:** L 10-14" (25-36 cm) W 20-28" (51-71 cm)www.audubon.org**RANGE:**

Most of North and South America. Breeds from the treeline in northern Alaska and Canada south to northern Texas. Winters from southern British Columbia to Argentina. Lives year-round in Colorado.

HABITAT:

Nests in forests and thickets; in our area in both deciduous and evergreen trees.

DIET:

A natural predator; feeds primarily on birds; rarely takes small rodents, bats, squirrels, frogs, lizards, snakes, and insects.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – a platform of twigs in dense foliage in mixed or coniferous forests, open deciduous woodlands, thickets, edges; lined with bark strips, twigs, grass. Nesting begins in May. A clutch is usually 4-5 spotted eggs. Incubation lasts 32-35 days. When the clutch is large, it presupposes abundant prey. Female does most of the incubating though the male relieves her for an hour or two a day. Chicks fledge in 24-27 days. The female keeps the chicks warm and redistributes the food brought by the male.

ADAPTATIONS:

Their short wings and long tail make them very skillful at swerving and enable them to maintain a high speed over short distances. Their long legs and talons enable them to grasp prey in the moment of escape. They fly unobtrusively low when chasing prey or approaching their nests.

VOICE:

A shrill *kik, kik, kik*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Numbers dropped in mid-20th century, possibly as a result of DDT and other pesticides in the food chain, and then recovered somewhat through early 1980s.

NAME:

Common: **Red-tailed Hawk**
Scientific: *Buteo jamaicensis*

SIZE: L 22" (56 cm) W 50" (127 cm)



www.audubon.org

RANGE:

This species breeds from central Alaska across Canada and south to the West Indies. Common migrant from the plains into the montane life zone in Colorado. Many are year-round residents in Boulder County.

HABITAT:

High coniferous trees, deciduous trees, and on rocky ledges in the plains and at higher elevations in non-populated areas of the mountains. Their nest is a bulky pile of sticks and twigs lined with inner bark strips, evergreen sprigs, and green leaves.

DIET:

Feeds mostly on rodents, also insects, rabbits, squirrels, reptiles, fish, and amphibians.

REPRODUCTION:

Breeding territories include the plains, foothills, and mountains. Breeds in late April and early May. Lays 2-3 dull white eggs, spotted with brown and is thought to mate for life. Eggs hatch in 30-35 days and chicks fledge in 45-46 days after hatching.

ADAPTATIONS:

These birds often soar on the air currents as they lazily circle high in the sky. Long, broad wings enable them to do this. Talons and curved beak are adaptations for preying upon animals.

VOICE:

Sound is an asthmatic squeal, *keer-r-r* (slurring downward), somewhat like the sound of escaping steam.

DID YOU KNOW?

Top speed in level flight is 35-40 mph. Red-tails are somewhat in decline because of disappearing woodland habitat.

NAME:

Common: **American Kestrel** (*Sparrow Hawk*)
Scientific: *Falco sparverius*



SIZE: L 10-1/2" (27 cm) W 23" (58 cm)

RANGE:

Most of North and South America. Winters south from southern British Columbia. Breeds and found all year in Colorado.

www.audubon.org

HABITAT:

Open country, prairies, wooded streams, farmlands, and cities. Inhabits any kind of open or semi-open situation, from forest clearings to farmland to desert, wherever it can find adequate prey and some raised perches.

DIET:

Eats insects, mice, voles, birds, small snakes, lizards, and frogs. It might almost be called the "Grasshopper Falcon" because of the large number of grasshoppers in its diet.

REPRODUCTION:

Nests in cavities of isolated trees, saguaro cacti, cliffs, buildings, or magpie nests. Lays 3-7 (usually 4-5) whitish, spotted eggs which are incubated mostly by the female for 29-31 days. Male calls the female from the nest to feed her. Young leave the nest 30-31 days after hatching.

ADAPTATIONS:

In open country it is commonly seen perched on roadside wires, or hovering low over a field on rapidly beating wings, waiting to pounce on prey.

VOICE:

A rapid, high *klee-klee* or *killy- killy- killy*.

DID YOU KNOW?

"Sparrow Hawk" is a misnomer because sparrows are only a small part of its diet and it is a falcon, not a hawk. All members of the falcon family are protected by federal and state laws and may not be kept in captivity without a permit. Resembles the hawk family in having a strongly hooked bill and taloned feet, but is different internally and in having conspicuously toothed and notched bill. Migration speed – 22-39 mph.

NAME:

Common: **Killdeer**
Scientific: *Charadrius vociferus*



www.audubon.org

SIZE: L 10-1/2" (27 cm)

RANGE:

Common summer resident in Colorado; uncommon winter resident. Breeds in northern Midwest states, Great Lakes area to northeast United States, and into most of Canada.

HABITAT:

Open ground with low vegetation (or no vegetation at all), including lawns, golf courses, driveways, parking lots, and gravel-covered roofs, as well as pastures, fields, sandbars and mudflats. This species is one of the least water-associated of all shorebirds.

DIET:

Feeds on a wide variety of insects, including beetles, caterpillars, grasshoppers, fly larvae, many others; also eats spiders, earthworms, centipedes, crayfish, snails. Eats mostly insects and small amounts of seeds.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest –on ground in open area with good visibility, as on bare soil, short-grass field, gravel road; sometimes on gravel roof. Nest is shallow scrape in soil or gravel, either unlined or lined with pebbles, grass, twigs, bits of debris. Eggs – 3-5, buffed blotched with black and brown. Incubation, 24-28 days by both parents. Young leave nest soon after hatching and do their own foraging for food. Young fledge in ~25 days.

VOICE:

The Killdeer calls its name as it flies over farmland and other open country, *kill-deer, kill-deer*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many a person has been fooled by the bird's "broken-wing" act, in which it flutters along the ground in a show of injury, luring intruders away from its nest.

NAME:

Common: **American Avocet**
Scientific: *Recurvirostra americana*

**RANGE:**

Common to fairly common migrant. Breeds in southwestern Canada and western United States. Winters from southern United States to Guatemala.

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HABITAT:

Beaches, flats, shallow lakes, marshes and prairie ponds.

DIET:

Mostly crustaceans, insects (~2/3 of diet), aquatic vegetation, and seeds.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – among tufts of vegetation on gravel, sand, and mud flats below brush. Lining of nests is variable, often dry grass, mud chips. Eggs – olive-buff, marked with brown, black. Eggs hatch in 22 to 29 days (young hatch synchronously). Chicks fledge in 28 to 35 days.

ADAPTATIONS:

Long, upturned bill and long legs which help in feeding on the bottom in shallow water.

VOICE:

A sharp “*wheek*” or “*kleet*,” excitedly repeated.

DID YOU KNOW?

Loosely colonial. Loud calls and mobbing of predator is typical defense on breeding grounds. Male and female develop brood patches; male incubates more frequently for the first 8 days, then primarily female for the next 16 days. Young are precocial (*hatched covered with down and with open eyes*).

NAME:Common: **Great Horned Owl**Scientific: *Bubo virginianus***SIZE:** L 18-25" (46-63 cm) W 40-57" (~101-145 cm)**RANGE:**

Tree limit in North America to Tierra del Fuego at the tip of South America.

www.audubon.org**HABITAT:**

Deciduous forests, coniferous forests, riparian areas, and open country up to an elevation of 10,000 feet.

DIET:

Nocturnal. Eats rabbits, rodents, skunks, house cats, and other small mammals. Will eat any other owls in its territory and most birds.

REPRODUCTION:

Courtship and nesting begins in late winter (mid-January to mid-March). Nests in trees, caves, cliff ledges, broken-off tree stump, sometimes on the ground. Typically uses old nest of other large bird, such as hawk, eagle, crow, heron, usually 20-60' above ground. Adds little or no nest material, aside from feathers at times. One to six dull white eggs (usually 2-3) are laid. Incubation begins with first egg to protect it from chilling; incubation 26-35 days. Young fledge in approximately 35 days; fly at 63-70 days; fed by adults for several months.

ADAPTATIONS:

Disc-like facial structure aids in extraordinary hearing. Ears asymmetrically placed to aid location of prey by sound. Powerful talons; usually large eyes for night vision. Feathers designed for extremely silent gliding flight.

VOICE:Resonant hooting of 3-8 hoots: *Hoo, hu-hu-hu, Hoo, Hoo*. Female hoots are higher and in shorter sequence.**DID YOU KNOW?**

The silent glide and excellent hearing allow it to capture prey unheard and generally unseen (by people). A wingspan of up to five feet. Eyes are fixed in socket so the head must turn to shift its gaze. Eyesight is almost 100 times keener than that of man.

NAME:

Common: **Broad-tailed Hummingbird**
Scientific: *Selasphorus platycercus*



SIZE: L 4" (10 cm)

RANGE:

Mainly in mountain region: Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado. Winters south to Mexico and Guatemala.

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HABITAT:

High meadows, willow thickets, open undergrowth; common in lower foothills in summer. Migrants occur in all semi-open habitats of mountains and also make stopovers in lowlands.

DIET:

Includes nectar of paintbrush, larkspur, gilia, insects in flowers and air, also spiders and tree sap. Consumes twice body weight in nectar daily.

REPRODUCTION:

Male defends territory by perching high, scanning for and then chasing intruders. In courtship display, male repeatedly climbs high in the air (up to 60 feet) and then dives, with a loud wing-trill. Nest site is in a tree, on a near-horizontal twig or branch, typically sheltered from above by an overhanging branch. Nest (built by female) is a lichen-covered cup of plant down bound with cocoons or spider's silk. Lays 2 white eggs. Female incubates eggs 14-17 days and cares for young. Young fledge in 21-26 days.

ADAPTATIONS:

Drops into torpor during cold nights to conserve energy (in high mountains). Huge keel for attachment of wing muscles. Has the highest metabolic rate and greatest metabolic range of any vertebrate. In torpor, heartbeat drops to 1/10 of normal rate. Wing rotates during upstroke to apply power and lift.

VOICE:

Male's wing-beats produce a loud, trilling whistle due to sharp pointed, notched outer primaries. Calls include a sharp *chip*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Weighs a little more than a penny, but migrates great distances. Male attacks all birds that invade his territory during breeding season. Attracted to anything red. Wingbeat 30 times a second. Eggs the size of a jellybean. Nest stretches as the young grow.

NAME:

Common: **Northern Flicker, (red-shafted)**
Scientific: *Colaptes auratus*



SIZE: L 12-1/2" (32 cm)

RANGE:

Rocky Mountains to Pacific Coast, Alaska to Nicaragua. All life zones; foothills to tree line. Migrates up mountains in latter part of summer, down to plains in winter.

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HABITAT:

Open country, sparsely wooded regions; most common around farms and cut-over woods, also, sagebrush borderland, heavy woods. Often seen on ground. Nests in cavities in dead trees, stumps, holes in river banks. Takes one week to construct nest. Nesting cavities chiseled fresh each year.

DIET:

Eats primarily ants. Also feeds on beetles, termites, caterpillars, and other insects. Eats many fruits and berries, especially in fall and winter, and eats seeds and nuts at times.

REPRODUCTION:

Courtship is noisy and active with calling, drumming, wing and tail flashing, billing and bobbing while pair faces each other. Nests April to May; 5-8 eggs. Eggs hatch in 11-14 days and young fledge in 25-28 days. Young fed regurgitated food for three weeks. Male helps care for eggs and young. Interbreeds with yellow-shafted race. Many color combinations of mustaches and head patches.

ADAPTATIONS:

Stiff tail supports while perching, strong claws, chisel-like bill. Extra-large muscles and thick skull act as buffer for impact while drilling and drumming. Long sticky tongue used for getting at ants.

VOICE (COMMUNICATION):

Hammers on resonant pieces of wood or metal, which could be territorial or for mate. Elaborate vocabulary spring call is loud "wick, wick, wick, wick."

DID YOU KNOW?

Parents teach young to forage by placing food under crevice in the bark in full view of chick. Chick must pick it out or go hungry. Not a diehard woodpecker; picks easier life of sticking three-inch tongue into anthills to feed.

NAME:

Common: **Steller's Jay**
Scientific: *Cyanocitta stelleri*



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SIZE: *L 11-1/2" (29 cm)*

RANGE:

Resident from SE Alaska, SW British Columbia, SW Alberta, south through conifer regions of pacific states and through mountains of the western United States, south through the mountains of Mexico and southern Nicaragua.

HABITAT:

Common in oak woodlands and coniferous portions of Colorado, especially the Ponderosa pine belt of the foothills. Sometimes scavenges at campsites. Some movement to lower elevations in winter.

DIET:

Seeds, berries, acorns, nuts, and other fruits make up roughly 70% of diet. Remainder includes insects, other invertebrates, small vertebrates, birds' eggs, and nestlings.

December-January diet 90-99% acorns or pine seeds. Will eat peanuts and whole kernel corn at platform bird feeders.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest is a bulky bowl of twigs, dry leaves cemented with mud and lined with rootlets, pine needles, and grass; 8-25 feet high in trees. Two to six eggs are laid, usually four, color pale greenish blue marked with dark browns. Incubation is mostly or entirely by female, about 16-18 days; flight of young ~3 weeks after hatching. Breeding range 6,500 to 8,000 ft. in elevation.

VOICE:

A loud *shook-shook-shook* or *shack-shack-shack* or *wheck-wek-wek-wek-wek* or *kwesh-kwesh-kwesh*; many other notes. Frequently mimics Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle.

DID YOU KNOW?

Between the Rockies and the Pacific, this is the only jay with a crest. It is one of the most common winter birds in the Colorado Mountains.

NAME:

Common: **Black-billed Magpie**
Scientific: *Pica pica*



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SIZE: L 19" (48 cm)

RANGE:

Western North America, from southern Alaska to Nevada, Utah and Colorado. Does not migrate.

HABITAT:

Rangeland, brushy country, conifers, streamsides, forest edges and farms. Requires open areas for foraging. Often found near human habitation.

DIET:

Varied diet consisting of 85% insects, carrion, invertebrates, small vertebrates; 15% fruit and seeds. Nestlings fed 95% animal food.

REPRODUCTION:

Monogamous. Female lays from 5-8 greenish-gray eggs marked with brown. Incubates the eggs for 16-21 days. Young fledge in 25-29 days. Male feeds female throughout laying and incubation. Newly hatched birds are helpless. Nest is large and conspicuous with bulky dome covering entire structure; base and outer walls of heavy sticks enclose bowl of mud, lined with rootlets, fine plant stems, and hair. Often takes six weeks to build the nest, but it may last for several years. The domed shape of the nest protects it from raiders.

ADAPTATIONS:

Moves north to south, east to west, within its range as weather patterns change; may also move up and down mountains.

VOICE:

A harsh, rapid *queg-queg-queg-queg* or *wah-wah-wah-wah*. Also a querulous, nasal *maag* or *aag-aag*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Quite social, with flocks of up to 40 individuals. Nests individually or in loose colonies. Pairs may remain together throughout the year. Not a fast or a long distance flier. Old nests occasionally repaired and reused or may be used by other birds or animals. Very intelligent.

NAME:

Common: **Common Raven**
Scientific: *Corvus corax*



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SIZE: L 24" (61 cm)

RANGE:

Resident from the mountains of south-central British Columbia, Oregon, Montana, and North Dakota south through western Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, California, and Mexico to Nicaragua. A fairly common bird of the mountains and western areas of the United States.

HABITAT:

Mountains, plains, deserts, in forests and open ranges. Nests are situated on inaccessible rock ledges against canyon walls or rocky cliffs. Made of branches, twigs (occasionally wire), lined with shreds of bark and hair. Nest is 18-24 inches in height, 24 inches in diameter.

DIET:

Omnivorous. May feed on practically anything, but majority of diet apparently is animal matter. Feeds on a wide variety of insects, including beetles, caterpillars, and others; also rodents, lizards, frogs, eggs and young of other birds, seeds and fruit. Regularly eats carrion and garbage.

REPRODUCTION:

Mates for life. Eggs 4-6 greenish marked with brown and olive, laid in spring (March-May) and hatch in 18-21 days. Young fledge in 38-44 days. Young are fed insects at first, later meat. Parents adjust nest lining according to the temperature to provide warming or cooling for young. Parents give water to nestlings from their beaks. Female will immerse in water and "bathe" young by applying her wet breast feathers to them.

ADAPTATIONS:

Eats anything, a natural scavenger. Adapts to any environment. Strong flyers.

VOICE:

Raucous voice – a croaking *cr-r-ruck* or *prruk*; also a metallic *tok*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Year round resident. Parents keep the nest and the naked young clean. For ~two weeks, parents "eat" the droppings of the nestlings, ejecting them after they leave the nest.

NAME:

Common: **Violet-green Swallow**
Scientific: *Tachycineta thalassina*



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SIZE: L 5-1/4" (13 cm)

RANGE:

Breeds from Alaska, western Canada, south locally into mountains of Mexico. Winters from southern California and Mexico to Central America.

HABITAT:

Lives well in urban, rural or mountainous environments. Pairs return to old nesting cavities in dead pines, crannies of buildings, bird houses or in holes in cliffs.

DIET:

Eats insects which are caught while swallows are flying.

REPRODUCTION:

Nests in harmony with other species. Nests are constructed of grass and weed stems lined with feathers. Lays 4-6 eggs which hatch in 13-14 days. Has only one brood per season. Young fledge 16-24 days after hatching.

VOICE:

A twitter; a thin *chip*; rapid *chit-chit-chit*, *wheet*, *wheet*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Nest and travel as a group. Forestry practice of removing standing dead trees has greatly reduced availability of natural nest sites.

NAME:

Common: **Black-capped Chickadee**
Scientific: *Poecile atricapillus*



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SIZE: L 5-1/4" (13 cm)

RANGE:

Alaska, Canada, and northern half of the United States. Does not migrate much; may move up and down the mountains as seasons change. Nests to 9,000 feet; winters below 8,000 feet elevation.

HABITAT:

Mixed and deciduous woods, willow thickets, groves, and shade trees. Most common in open woods and forest edge, especially where birches or alders grow; avoids purely coniferous forest.

DIET:

Insects, seeds, and fruit are the main food sources. Diet varies with season; vegetable matter (seeds and fruits) ~10% of diet in summer, up to 50% in winter. Summer diet is mostly caterpillars and other insects, some spiders, snails, and other invertebrates; also eats berries. In winter, feeds on insects (especially their eggs and pupae), seeds, berries, small fruits. Common at bird feeders eating suet and sunflower seeds.

REPRODUCTION:

Nests in holes, either natural or excavated by them. Uses plant down, moss, feathers, hair, or insect cocoons to line nest. Lays 6-8 white eggs, finely marked with reddish-brown. Eggs hatch in 11-13 days; young fledge within 14-18 days. Male feeds female during incubation. Males share in nest building and feeding of the nestlings.

ADAPTATIONS:

Responds to danger within 30 milliseconds and disappears quickly.

VOICE:

A clearly enunciated *chick-a-dee-dee-dee*. Call of the male a clear whistle, *fee-bee-ee* or *fee-bee*, the first note higher. If disturbed on the nest, the female makes an explosive snake-like hiss. Very vocal in groups.

DID YOU KNOW?

In winter, forages and roosts in stable flocks of up to 12 birds. Each year devours eggs and larvae of many insects. During flight, wings beat 30 times per second.

NAME:

Common: **White-breasted Nuthatch**
Scientific: *Sitta carolinensis*



SIZE: L 5-3/4" (15 cm)

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RANGE:

Fairly common year-round resident of mixed forests, aspen groves, and plains riparian woodlands; rarely found in pure coniferous forest. Often favors woodland edge, along rivers, roads, clearings.

HABITAT:

Nests up to 10,000 feet virtually wherever there are trees of some kind--across southern Canada, the lower 48 states, and south to southern Mexico.

DIET:

Mostly insects, also seeds. Eats mostly insects (and spiders) during summer, supplementing these with seeds in winter. Will also feed on suet, sunflower seeds, and peanut-butter mixtures at feeders. Young are fed entirely on insects and spiders.

REPRODUCTION:

Pairs remain together on nesting territory all year, may mate for life. Nest - large natural cavity or old woodpecker hole, usually 15-60' above ground; may rarely use birdhouses; may sometimes excavate own nest cavity. Female builds nest in cavity, a simple cup of bark fibers, grasses, twigs, hair. Eggs - 5-9, rarely 10. White, spotted with reddish-brown. Female incubates, is fed on nest by male. Incubation, 12-14 days. Both parents feed young. Age when young leave nest is variable; reported as 14-26 days. 1 brood per year.

VOICE:

A nasal *yank-yank-yank-yank-yank*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Adults may spend minutes at a time sweeping the outside and inside of nest with a crushed insect held in bill; chemical secretions of insects may help repel predators.

NAME:

Common: **American Dipper**
Scientific: *Cinclus mexicanus*



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RANGE:

Uncommon through parts of the western United States, up through western Canada to Alaska.

HABITAT:

Fast-flowing, rocky streams in mountains; often in narrow canyons. In winter, may move to streams at lower elevations, sometimes accepting narrow creeks or slower-moving rivers. Usually seen bobbing up and down on a rock in the stream, or flying low over the water, following the course of the creek.

DIET:

Mostly aquatic insects, including larvae of caddisflies, mayflies, beetles, and mosquitos as well as adults of these insects and many others; some worms, snails, and fish eggs.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – sites include ledge on mossy rock just above stream, or behind waterfall, or under bridges crossing mountain streams; often placed where nest remains wet from flying spray. Domed structure with entrance low on one side; made of mosses, twigs, rootlets, or grass woven in. Eggs – usually 4-5, white. Incubation is by female for 13-17 days. Young fledge at about 18-25 days, and are able to swim and dive almost immediately.

ADAPTATIONS:

To be able to survive in cold waters during the winter, the American Dipper has a low metabolic rate, extra oxygen-carrying capacity in its blood, and a thick coat of feathers.

VOICE:

Song, clear and ringing, with repeated notes. Call, a sharp *zeet*.

DID YOU KNOW?

The American Dipper is North America's only truly aquatic songbird. It catches all of its food underwater in swiftly flowing streams by swimming and walking on the stream bottom. The species is a good indicator of water quality.

NAME:

Common: **American Robin**
Scientific: *Turdus migratorius*

SIZE: L 10" (25 cm)



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RANGE:

Breeds throughout northern Alaska and Canada, south through the United States and central Mexico. Winter range includes coastal areas of the United States and the southern half of the interior south to Bermuda and Guatemala.

HABITAT:

Habitat generalist: forest, woodland, gardens, parks, residential areas. In winter, flocks gather in wooded areas where trees or shrubs have good crops of berries.

DIET:

Eats insects, earthworms, caterpillars, snails, and much fruit. Young are fed insects.

REPRODUCTION:

Returns to area near where hatched to make own nest. Nest consists of an outer layer of grasses and sticks, a middle layer of mud (which the female may have to make herself if the weather is dry), and an inner layer of grass. Female does most of the nest building and incubates the 4-5 pale blue-green eggs. Male shares in the feeding duties. After fledging, male is solely responsible for the young, while the female lays more eggs, thus raising two broods each year.

VOICE:

Loud, liquid song has been described as sounding like a variable *cheerily-cheer-up-cheerio*. Varied calls include a rapid *tut tut tut*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Monogamous during one season. Males tolerate other species in their territory, but not other robins. Intruders are warned away by several threatening postures: tail lifts, crouching and charging. Territorial during the day; males flock together at night, even during the nesting season. Both sexes stay in flocks in wintering grounds. Main predators are dogs and cats. High mortality rate – 80% die during first year. A partial migrant.

NAME:

Common: **Common Yellowthroat**
Scientific: *Geothlypis trichas*



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SIZE: L 5" (13 cm)

RANGE:

Canada to southern Mexico. Winters from southern United States to Panama.

HABITAT:

Swamps, marshes, wet thickets, grassy fields, and woodland margins.

DIET:

Insects, spiders, and a few seeds. Occasionally gleans from the ground.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – cup-shaped, from ground to three feet up in shrubs or bushes; bulky, loosely made of weed stems, grass, bark, ferns, lined with fine materials. Eggs, usually 3-5, creamy white with brown and black spots. Incubation is by female only. The male feeds the female on the nest during incubation. Eggs hatch in approximately 12 days; nestlings fledge in 8-10 days. Two broods.

VOICE:

Song, a bright rapid chant, *witchity-witchity-witchity-witch*. Call, a husky *tchep*.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the three most frequent cowbird hosts. Perhaps the most abundant warbler. Young remain dependent on parents for longer than most warblers; second brood may be fed up to migration time. May begin migration as family group.

NAME:

Common: **Spotted Towhee**
Scientific: *Pipilo maculatus*



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SIZE: L 7-1/2" (19 cm)

RANGE:

Plains and foothills life zones during spring/summer breeding months. A widespread towhee of the western United States, sometimes abundant in chaparral and on brushy mountain slopes.

HABITAT:

Open woods, undergrowth, brushy edges, chaparral, and streamside thickets.

DIET:

Forages mostly on the ground, frequently scratching in the leaf-litter in search of larvae, insects. Also sometimes forages up in shrubs and low trees. Busy early in spring eating insects even before they breed. Also eats seeds, berries, and acorns. Nestlings are fed insects and some fruit.

REPRODUCTION:

Courtship – male chases female and both rapidly open and close wings and tail.

Nest – female selects site, usually less than 5 feet above ground in low bush and often in a scratched depression, rim of cup flush with ground surface. Nest is made of leaves, bark strips, grass, twigs, rootlets, lined with fine grass, hair. Lays 3-4 grayish to creamy white eggs peppered with brown dots. Incubation is by female. Eggs hatch in 12-14 days and chicks fledge in 9-11 days after hatching and may remain with parents for some time. Nestlings often leave nest before they are able to fly. 1 or 2 broods per year.

VOICE:

Song, a drawn-out buzzy *chweeeeeee*. Sometimes *chup chup chup zeeeeeeee*; variable.
Call, a cat-like *guee* or *cheeee*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Family groups remain together through summer. Seems like a ventriloquist when you are trying to locate one. Scratches like a hen, kicks through leaves with both feet off the ground at the same time. Makes so much noise that it sounds like a much larger animal. Nonchalant when nest is approached although female will sometimes pull a broken-wing maneuver to divert attention from the nest.

NAME:

Common: **Song Sparrow**
Scientific: *Melospiza melodia*



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SIZE: L 5-3/4-7-1/2" (16-19 cm)

RANGE:

Very widespread in North America from southern Alaska, Canada to Central Mexico. Song sparrows are found in brushy areas, especially dense streamside thickets. In Rocky Mountains, found up to ~6,500 feet elevation.

HABITAT:

Thickets, brush, marshes, roadsides and gardens. In most areas, found in brushy fields, streamsides, shrubby marsh edges, woodland edges, hedgerows, well-vegetated gardens.

DIET:

In summer insects provide ~50% of diet. Forage in grasses, brushes, trees for beetles, grasshoppers, cutworms, army worms, ants, wasps, flies, winged termites, bugs and leafhoppers. Also eats grass and forb seeds and some berries and fruit.

Will come to bird feeders.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – usually located in dense vegetation along watercourses and marshes; sometimes along forest edges, clearings, bogs, and gardens. Most nests are on the ground, hidden beneath tufts of grass, shrubs, brush piles and, rarely, in cavities. Nests are constructed of grass, forbs, leaves, bark strips and lined with fine materials, usually from ground level to 3 feet up in bushes or small trees. Eggs – 3-5 heavily speckled, pale blue to greenish-white; incubated for 12-14 days. Young fledge 9-12 days after hatching. By 21-30 days after hatching, young leave the nesting territory. Male takes charge of young as soon as they can fly well and female begins next clutch of eggs.

VOICE:

Song, a variable series of notes, some musical, some buzzy; usually starts with three or four bright repetitious notes, *sweet sweet sweet, etc.* Call note, a low nasal *tcchep*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Along with the Yellow Warbler, they are the most frequent victims of Brown-headed Cowbird nest parasitism.

NAME:

Common: **White-crowned Sparrow**
Scientific: *Zonotrichia leucophrys*



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SIZE: L 7" (18 cm)

RANGE:

Across Canada to Alaska; south through western United States. Often found in alpine areas of Colorado. Winters in flocks in western and southern United States, Mexico, and Cuba.

HABITAT:

Brushland, forest edges, thickets, chaparral, gardens, and parks; in winter also on farms and in desert washes. Patronizes bird feeders.

DIET:

Mostly seeds, other vegetable matter, and insects. Feeds mostly on seeds of weeds and grasses in winter. Feeds on other vegetable matter, including buds, flowers, moss capsules, willow catkins, berries, and small fruits at various seasons. Also eats insects and spiders, especially in summer. Young are fed mostly insects.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – female chooses nest site, usually on ground at base of shrub or grass clump, often placed in shallow depression. Nest, built by female, is an open cup of grass, twigs, weeds, rootlets, strips of bark, lined with grass, feathers, animal hair. Eggs – 4-5 creamy white to pale greenish, heavily spotted with reddish brown. Incubation, by female only, 11-14 days. Young leave the nest ~7-12 days after hatching. Male may care for fledglings while female begins 2nd nesting attempt.

VOICE:

Song, one or more clear, plaintive whistles, followed by husky trilled whistles.

DID YOU KNOW?

Stable winter flocks of 10-50 show strong site attachment to wintering territory. Males often sing at night. Hops on the ground when feeding, scratching with both feet. Females tend to winter farther south than males.

NAME:

Common: **Dark-eyed Junco**
Scientific: *Junco hyemalis*



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SIZE: L 6-1/4" (16 cm)

RANGE:

In winter, found over much of the continent and in most of Colorado in all seasons. Winter as far south as the gulf states and northern Mexico.

HABITAT:

Coniferous and mixed forests, woodland edges and suburban yards, feeding on the ground, making ticking calls as they fly up into the bushes; in winter, undergrowth, roadsides, and brush.

DIET:

Usually ground feeders – seeds, insects, and a few spiders in summer. Nestlings are fed mostly insects, initially partially regurgitated. Will come to a platform feeder, but often forage on the ground under the feeder.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – built mostly by female, usually in a shallow depression with overhead protection, often against a vertical surface. An open cup made of coarse grass, moss, weeds, leaves, rootlets, forbs, lined with fine materials. Eggs – 3-5 white to pale bluish-white marked with reddish brown. Eggs hatch in 12-13 days and nestlings fledge in 9-13 days after hatching. Two broods per year, occasionally three. Rapid tarsal development enables nestlings to run from nest if threatened before they can fly.

VOICE:

Song, a loose trill, suggestive of Chipping Sparrow's song, but more musical. Call, a light *smack*; also clicking or ticking notes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Frequently seen in mixed groups in winter. Slate-colored Junco sometimes called "Snowbird" because they are dark above and white below, like a winter day with clouds and snow. White outer tail feathers serve as recognition for similar species in flock. The several races were once regarded as species, but are now combined as the Dark-eyed Junco.

NAME:

Common: **Western Meadowlark**
Scientific: *Sturnella neglecta*



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SIZE: L 9-1/2" (24 cm)

RANGE:

Southwestern Canada through the western United States to the highlands of central Mexico. Winters in western United States south to central Mexico. Year round resident in Colorado.

HABITAT:

Grasslands, cultivated fields, pastures, meadows, and prairies.

DIET:

Mostly insects and seeds; forages by walking on the ground. In summer, majority of diet consists of insects – beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, caterpillars, ants, and others; also spiders, snails, sowbugs. In fall and winter the diet shifts to more seeds and waste grain.

REPRODUCTION:

Male sings to defend nesting territory. One male may have more than one mate. Nest – built by female, in natural or scraped depression; domed structure with entrance on the side, made of interwoven coarse grass, lined with finer grass, hair. Usually has narrow trails leading to nest through the grass. Eggs – 3-7 eggs, white marked with browns, purples; incubation by female; eggs hatch in 13-15 days. Nestlings fledge in ~12 days after hatching. Two broods.

VOICE:

Song, variable, 7-10 flute-like notes, gurgling and double noted. Call, a low, throaty, explosive *chuck*; also gives a rattling flight call. Males often sing on the wing.

DID YOU KNOW?

Territorial where Eastern and Western Meadowlarks overlap; some males sing songs of both species. Males have repertoires of 5-12 song types. Roosts on ground in small groups; gregarious in winter with large flocks often along roadsides.

NAME:

Common: **Red-winged Blackbird**
Scientific: *Agelaius phoeniceus*



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SIZE: L 8-3/4" (22 cm)

RANGE:

Southern Alaska, most of Canada, south through the United States to the West Indies and Costa Rica.

HABITAT:

Breeds most commonly in freshwater marshes, brushy swamps, hayfields; forages in surrounding fields, orchards, woodlands, and along water edges.

DIET:

Mostly insects and seeds. In summer, feeds on insects – beetles, grasshoppers, caterpillars, and others; spiders, snails, millipedes. Majority of diet is seeds – grasses, weeds, waste grain; also some berries and fruit.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – near or over water, usually in emergent vegetation or shrub, rarely in low tree; woven of sedges, grass, lined with fine grass, rushes. Eggs – 3-4 pale bluish-green eggs, marked with dark colors. Eggs hatch in 10-12 days; nestlings fledge in 11-14 days.

VOICE:

Call, a loud *check* and a high, slurred *tee-err*. Song, a liquid, gurgling *konk-la-ree* or *o-ka-lay*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Frequent Cowbird host. Strongly territorial on clumped territories. Late summer and fall, flocks occasionally damage grain crops, especially in the Midwest. In addition to large fall and winter roosts, males may roost together in early summer. Form enormous mixed winter flocks with Grackles, Rusty Blackbirds, Starlings, and Cowbirds.

NAME:

Common: **House Finch**
Scientific: *Carpodacus mexicanus*



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SIZE: L 6" (15 cm)

RANGE:

Southern British Columbia, throughout the United States, including Hawaii, south through most of Mexico; foothills to lower montane.

HABITAT:

Urban areas, open woods, arid scrub, cultivated land, near bird feeders.

DIET:

Seeds, fruit buds, berries, and tree sap. Enormous consumer of weed seeds. Eats only a few insects, mostly small ones such as aphids. Feeds nestlings almost entirely on regurgitated seeds.

REPRODUCTION:

Nest – variable placement, including appropriation of other species' nests. Nest is open cup of grass, weeds, fine twigs, leaves, rootlets, feathers, string, or other debris; often reused for later broods. Placed in bushes, shrubs, trees, and buildings from 12 to 15 feet above ground. Eggs – 4-5 bluish-white or pale bluish-green eggs sparsely marked with brown. Eggs hatch in 12-14 days; nestlings fledge in 12-15 days after hatching. One to three broods.

ADAPTATIONS:

Conical bill aids in seed cracking.

VOICE:

Song, bright, loose, and disjointed; often ends in a nasal *wheer*. Call, suggests a House Sparrow, but more musical.

DID YOU KNOW?

New York pet shop owners, who had been selling the finches illegally, released their birds in 1940 to escape prosecution; the finches survived, and began to colonize the New York suburbs. By 50 years later they had advanced halfway across the United States, meeting their western kin on the Great Plains.

NAME:

Common: **American Goldfinch**
Scientific: *Carduelis tristis*

SIZE: L 5" (13 cm)



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RANGE:

Common in all seasons in most of Colorado. Found throughout the United States into lower Canada and eastern Mexico.

HABITAT:

Areas of thistles and weeds, roadsides, open woods, edges. Found at all seasons in semi-open areas having open weedy ground and some trees and bushes for shelter, streamsides, woodland edges, suburban areas. In winter, also in some very open fields farther from trees.

DIET:

Mostly seeds, some insects. Diet is primarily seeds, especially from the daisy (composite) family, also those of weeds and grasses, and small seeds of trees (elm, birch, and alder), buds, bark of young twigs, maple sap. Feeds on insects to a limited extent in summer. Young are fed regurgitated matter mostly made up of seeds.

REPRODUCTION:

Nesting begins late in season in many areas, with most nesting activity during July and August. Nest - mostly in deciduous shrubs or trees, sometimes in conifers or in dense weeds, usually less than 30' above the ground and placed in horizontal or upright fork. Nest, built by female, is a solid, compact cup of plant fibers, spider webs, plant down (especially from thistles). Eggs - 4-6, pale bluish white, occasionally with light brown spots. Incubation is by female only, 12-14 days. Male feeds female during incubation. Both parents feed nestlings. Young leave nest about 11-17 days after hatching.

VOICE:

Bright *per-chick-o-ree*, delivered in flight and coinciding with each undulation of flight.

DID YOU KNOW?

Irregular in migration, with more remaining in North in winters with good food supply. Peak migration is usually mid-fall and early spring, but some linger south of nesting range to late spring or early summer.

RAPTORS

Raptors play an important role in maintaining the balance of nature. We live in a complex, interrelated world. By catching the slow, weak or sick, raptors contribute to the general health and stability of the ecosystem and keep the rodent and insect population in check.

The word *raptor* in Latin means to seize or to grasp. Eagles, falcons, hawks, and owls are all raptors, or birds of prey. Two-thirds of the birds of prey (hawks, eagles, falcons, accipiters, and vultures) are diurnal, meaning they are active during the day. The other third (owls) are mainly nocturnal or active during the night. The Great Horned Owl emerges at dusk to hunt over the terrain where the Red-tailed Hawk soared during the day. Nocturnal habits are no assurance of the safety of small mammals, every one of which is a potential meal for some predator, during the day or night.

Raptors have special characteristics that make them skillful hunters, including excellent eyesight. An eagle can see ~8 times better than humans. The large eyes of owls, placed on the front of the face framed by a facial disk, are primarily binocular and have great light gathering power. Experiments with Long-eared and Barn owls determined that they could locate a dead mouse in light 10-100 times dimmer than that needed by the human eye, and could capture a mouse in total darkness.

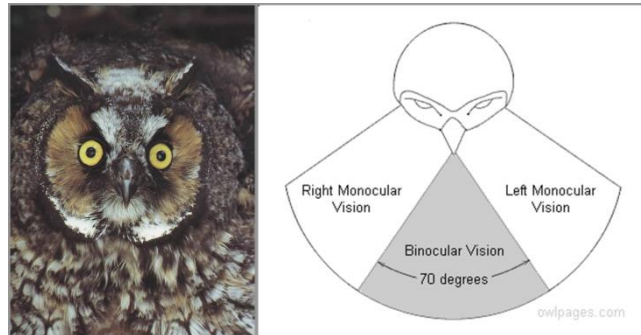
Raptors also have hooked bills for tearing flesh and strong, piercing talons for grabbing and holding prey. The method of capturing and killing prey used by raptors is to plunge at the prey and strike or clutch it with strong, hooked talons. However, vultures have no need for the strongly curved talons of other birds of prey as they prefer carrion as their food source. Their feet are relatively weak. Large birds of prey, like eagles, may live a more solitary existence so they can maintain a dependable prey population, but vultures are dependent on the accident of death, a windfall often means food for all.

Another characteristic which makes raptors skilled hunters is that they are strong fliers. Eagles have long wings to soar for hours on warm air currents called thermals, useful for both migration and hunting prey. Accipiters, like Cooper's, Goshawk, and Sharp-shinned hawks, have short wings and long tails so they can maneuver easily in a forest while chasing prey. Falcons have pointed wings for fast flying. In open country, a Peregrine Falcon is capable of going into a power dive estimated to reach 175 miles per hour. On the other hand, American Kestrels can often be seen hovering over a field in search of mice, voles, grasshoppers and other small prey.

But with all of these common characteristics, raptors are very different in size, shape, and weight. Sizes range from the Golden Eagle to the American Kestrel or the Northern Pygmy Owl.

OWLS

Owls have superb eyesight and although they are specialized for night vision, they can see very well in daylight. This efficiency is the result of many factors; one of the most important being eye size. Compared to the eyes of humans in relation to body size, owl eyes are many times larger. Designed for hunting at dusk or in the dark, owl lenses are not set in flattened eyeballs as in most other birds, but in deep horny tubes. Whereas the eyes of most birds are placed on the sides of the head, the eyes of owls are placed directly in front on a comparatively wide skull, and therefore, they provide completely binocular vision.



Owls not only lack the sweep of monocular vision that most birds have, but their eyes are nearly immovably fitted in their sockets. They are unable to roll their eyes in their sockets. This rigid eye structure is compensated for by quick reflex neck movements and very flexible vertebrae. An owl can turn its head almost (but not quite) all the way around. Owls are the only birds that drop the upper lid when blinking, but when they sleep, they raise the lower lid as other birds do. All birds also have a third eyelid, the nictitans, a transparent membrane, which, by blinking, keeps the eye moist and at the same time allows them to see.

An owl's hearing is so efficient that some owls, and perhaps all, can use it instead of sight. Their ears, long asymmetrical slits hidden behind the facial disk, can pinpoint the rustling of a mouse on the darkest nights. An additional help in hearing is that their faces are ringed with a disk of curved feathers, called a facial disk. In some species, these feathers are so stiff that they are not moved by flight, but can be controlled by facial muscles, which allow them to adjust the disk to face the prey and funnel the sound to the owl's ears.

In addition to the owl's ears and eyes, there are still other features that set them apart from other birds. Their feathers, aside from the facial disk, are constructed in such a way as to make their flight almost noiseless. The leading edge of the flight feathers is serrated, which breaks up the flow of air across the wing, deadening any noise. This feature eliminates most of the whir caused by the stiff primaries of other birds. During the day, owls often rest in trees where their coloration of their feathers gives them good camouflage.

RAPTORS OF BOULDER COUNTY

VULTURES

Turkey Vulture

OSPREY

HARRIERS

Northern Harrier

EAGLES

Golden Eagle

Bald Eagle

ACCIPITERS

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Cooper's Hawk

Northern Goshawk

BUTEOS

Red-tailed Hawk

Swainson's Hawk (*summer*)

Rough-legged Hawk (*winter*)

Ferruginous Hawk

FALCONS

American Kestrel

Merlin

Prairie Falcon

Peregrine Falcon

OWLS

Barn Owl

Eastern Screech Owl

Great Horned Owl

Long-eared Owl

Short-eared Owl

Burrowing Owl

Northern Saw-whet Owl

Northern Pygmy Owl

Snowy Owl (irruptions some years)

Flammulated Owl

Boreal Owl

VULTURES

Turkey Vulture

Dates in area: Summer resident – April to early October.
Local habitat: Plains (open areas such as roadsides, suburbs, farm fields), and foothills, especially along canyons.
Wintering grounds: Southern United States and Mexico.
Comment: Usually seen gliding overhead, riding the thermals, with a teetering flight and very few wingbeats. Their wings are held slightly raised, making a ‘V’ when seen head-on.

OSPREY

Osprey

Dates in area: April to September/October.
Local habitat: Near lakes, reservoirs, and rivers.
Wintering grounds: Coastal areas of southern United States and Central America.
Comments: These ‘fish hawks’ are best seen at nest poles erected at various sites in the region – Boulder County Fairgrounds at Cattail Pond, entrance road to St. Vrain State Park, and at local lakes and reservoirs.

HARRIERS

Northern Harrier

Dates in area: Rare summer resident; fairly common winter resident.
Local habitat: Primarily near cattail marshes and sedge/rush wetlands on the plains.
Wintering grounds: Southern United States and Mexico.
Comments: Harriers are often seen in fall and winter as they fly low over marshes and grasslands listening for voles and mice. Once considered a fairly common breeding species in Boulder County, the northern harrier is now probably our most endangered nesting bird.

EAGLES

Golden Eagle

Dates in area: Year-round resident.
Local habitat: Nests on cliff faces from the lower foothills to the high mountains.
Comments: Golden eagles range out onto the plains to hunt cottontails, prairie dogs, and other rodents. Many are killed by vehicles as they scavenge road kill, and others by power lines and windmills. Disturbance of cliff nesting habitats is also a concern.

Bald Eagle

Dates in area: Uncommon summer resident; fairly common winter resident.
Local habitat: Bald eagles were first observed nesting in Boulder County in 2002 and the number of nesting pairs has increased since then. Nests are primarily in cottonwoods in riparian areas away from human access, near prairie dog colonies.
Comments: Bald eagles primarily eat fish during the warmer months, but rely on the prairie dog colonies for prey during the winter.

ACCIPITERS

Sharp-shinned Hawk

- Dates in area: All year.
- Local habitat: Found in mixed woodlands of foothills and adjacent plains. Nest in dense forests from the foothills to the subalpine. During the nonbreeding season they hunt small birds and mammals along forest edges and sometimes at backyard bird feeders.
- Comments: Sharp-shinned hawks are the smallest hawk in North America and a daring, acrobatic flier. Their long legs, short wings, and long tails are used to navigate through deep woods at top speed in pursuit of songbirds and mice.

Cooper's Hawk

- Dates in area: Primarily from April to November; smaller numbers winter here.
- Local habitat: Wooded habitats from deep forests to leafy subdivisions and backyards.
- Wintering grounds: Southern United States and Mexico.
- Comments: Once thought to nest almost exclusively in Boulder County conifer forests, cooper's hawks now frequently nest in towns on the plains.

Northern Goshawk

- Dates in area: Uncommon year-round resident.
- Local habitat: Open conifer forests; higher mountains in the summer, foothills in winter.
- Comments: Northern goshawks nest in tall conifers and aspen groves from the upper foothills to the subalpine, where they hunt squirrels, mice, and songbirds. This reclusive hawk appears to be sensitive to intrusion into nesting areas by recreational users.

BUTEOS

Red-tailed Hawk

- Dates in area: Common year-round resident.
- Local habitat: Plains and foothill grasslands.
- Comments: The most common and best-known buteo in the United States. Red-tailed hawks are usually seen perched along highways or near a wooded margin, scanning the open field for prey.

Swainson's Hawk

- Dates in area: Summer resident; mid-April to early October.
- Local habitat: Grasslands, especially near wooded lakes and streams.
- Wintering grounds: South America, primarily in Argentina.
- Comments: Swainson's hawks nested historically on the prairies of eastern Boulder County, but with many of those areas invaded by trees and red-tailed hawks, some pairs have taken to urban open space areas.

Rough-legged Hawk

Dates in area: Uncommon winter resident on the plains; late October to mid-March.
Local habitat: Open grasslands interspersed with wetlands.
Wintering grounds: As far south as California, New Mexico, and Texas.
Comments: Numbers observed in winter in Boulder County have declined more than 90% since the early 1990s. Warming temperatures on the plains may be enabling wintering populations to shift farther north; fragmentation of native grasslands and wetlands on the plains of Boulder County may discourage these open country hawks from settling here during the winter.

Ferruginous Hawk

Dates in area: Winter resident, and occasional summer resident after young have fledged.
Local habitat: Grasslands.
Comments: The largest hawk in our region. Generally hunts for rodents on prairies and farmlands of eastern Colorado.

FALCONS

American Kestrel

Dates in area: Common year-round resident; numbers increase during warmer months.
Local habitat: Plains, foothill grasslands and lower canyons.
Comments: These small falcons nest in woodpecker holes throughout most of Boulder County, including in towns on the plains, and prey on small rodents, birds, and insects, especially grasshoppers. They often sit on power lines along country roads and are frequently seen hovering over their prey.

Merlin

Dates in area: Uncommon winter resident.
Local habitat: Merlins nest in forested openings, edges, and along rivers across northern North America. They have also begun nesting in towns and cities. During migration and winter, merlins are found in open forests, grasslands, and especially in areas with flocks of small songbirds or shorebirds.
Wintering grounds: Western United States, along Gulf coast, Florida, Mexico, Central America into the northern part of South America.
Comments: Feed on small birds and mice; occasionally wander into residential areas, especially during colder months to prey on sparrows and house finches.

Prairie Falcon

Dates in area: Uncommon year-round resident.
Local habitat: Wide-open habitats of the west, including sagebrush, desert, prairie, agricultural fields, and alpine meadows up to about 11,000 feet elevation. They nest on ledges on sheer rocky cliffs.
Comments: In flight, look for the dark triangle of 'armpit' feathers that distinguishes it from other light-colored falcons.

Peregrine Falcon

Dates in area: Uncommon summer resident; rare spring and fall migrant.
Local habitat: Plains, especially near rivers and lakes.
Wintering grounds: Gulf and East coasts, Mexico and Central America.
Comments: Powerful and fast-flying, the peregrine falcon hunts medium-sized birds, dropping down on them from high above in a spectacular stoop. Peregrines can be seen all over North America, but they are more common along the coasts.

OWLS

Barn Owl

Dates in area: Uncommon summer resident; rare winter resident.
Local habitat: Barn owls require large areas of open land over which to hunt. This can either be marsh, grasslands, or mixed agricultural fields. For nesting and roosting, they prefer quiet cavities, either in trees or man-made structures such as barns or silos.
Comments: While populations have declined in areas of the Great Plains as dead trees and old barns have been removed and rodent populations reduced by use of pesticides, numbers have increased steadily in Boulder County during the last several decades.

Eastern Screech Owl

Dates in area: Uncommon year-round resident.
Local habitat: Mixed deciduous woods bordering streams or wetlands.
Comments: In Boulder County they nest in riparian woodlands and in shady urban neighborhoods.

Great Horned Owl

Dates in area: All year.
Local habitat: These human-adapted habitat generalists nest in urban areas, grasslands, shrublands, riparian woodlands, and coniferous forests from the plains to near treeline.
Comments: Great horned owl populations have exploded in Boulder County, threatening nesting populations of prey species that include long-eared owl and burrowing owl.

Long-eared Owl

Dates in area: Uncommon to rare year-round resident.
Local habitat: Long-eared owls require a combination of grassland or other open country for foraging, and dense tall shrubs or trees for nesting and roosting, where their camouflage makes them hard to find.
Comments: Considered fairly common in Boulder County plains and foothills woodlands during the late 19th century, long-eared owls are now difficult to find.

Short-eared Owl

Dates in area: Occasional winter visitor.
Local habitat: Marshes and grasslands near lakes where they perch in low trees or on the ground.
Wintering grounds: Southern United States and northern Mexico.
Comments: Often active during the day. Similar to the northern harrier, they often fly low over a marsh tilting from side to side, listening for small prey.

Burrowing Owl

Dates in area: April to September in eastern Colorado.
Local habitat: Nesting pairs have declined in Boulder County where destruction or fragmentation of nesting habitat (prairie dog colonies) has occurred.
Wintering grounds: Southwest United States and Mexico.
Comments: These long-legged owls nest in abandoned prairie dog burrows and are often seen standing next to the burrow. Burrowing owls will abandon nests if grass grows tall enough to obstruct their view of terrestrial predators.

Northern Saw-whet Owl

Dates in area: All year; more common during colder months.
Local habitat: Aspen groves and open conifer forests in mountains and foothills. In Boulder County they seem to favor aspen groves and open coniferous forests between 6,000 and 10,000 feet.
Comments: Fairly common in our region, but hunts at night and is rarely seen. Saw-whet owls are so small and cryptically colored that their usual reaction to predators is to remain perfectly still. Look for them roosting in a cluster of small ponderosa pines.

Northern Pygmy Owl

Dates in area: All year.
Local habitat: In Boulder County, northern pygmy owls nest primarily in coniferous forests, from 5,500 to 10,000 feet. In winter, they migrate to lower elevations in canyons at the base of the foothills.
Comments: False eyespots on the back of the owls' heads may discourage attacks by songbirds and hawks.

Snowy Owl (rare irruptions)

Dates in area: Rare; wintering snowy owls may be forced to wander south into Colorado by prey shortages (lemmings) in Canada and Alaska.
Breeding grounds: Snowy Owls nest in the tundra, north of the Arctic Circle.
Comments: These owls are diurnal as there is no nighttime in their arctic breeding grounds, but they can also hunt in the dark.

Flammulated Owl

Dates in area: Summer resident.

Local habitat: These small reclusive owls nest in woodpecker holes in mature aspen groves or old-growth ponderosa pine woodlands from 6,000 to 10,000 feet.

Comments: Strictly nocturnal, it is best located at night by its call, a series of single or paired low, hoarse, hollow hoots.

Boreal Owl

Dates in area: Uncommon year-round resident.

Local habitat: Nest in woodpecker holes or other natural cavity almost exclusively in the subalpine life zone in isolated locations in Rocky Mountain spruce-fir forests.

Comments: Individuals may migrate downslope in winter, but during breeding season they rarely, if ever, leave the subalpine forest.