

# Waco Mammoth National Monument



## Content

Rob Bradfield

## Layout and Design

Rob Bradfield

## Photographs and Illustrations

Greg Lasley - Mississippi Kite, Cover  
iNaturalist users - Richard

Donaldson, Dan Pancamo,  
Greg Lasley, Jen Goellnitz,  
Nigel, timbojohn, pluvierdodu,  
Susan Elliot, Jose Antonio  
Linage Espinoza, Jody Shugart,  
Francesco Veronesi, ncb1221,  
Zach Schiff, Bernard Dupont,  
Jaime M. Simancas

All other photos licensed through  
Adobe Stock

Rob Bradfield - Illustrations

For more information about birding  
in the National Park Service visit:  
[www.nps.gov/articles/birding-for-beginners.htm](http://www.nps.gov/articles/birding-for-beginners.htm)

## Contact Us:

6220 Steinbeck Bend Dr.

Waco, Texas 76708

(254) 750-7946

[www.wacomammoth.org](http://www.wacomammoth.org)

City of Waco in partnership with  
National Park Service 2021.

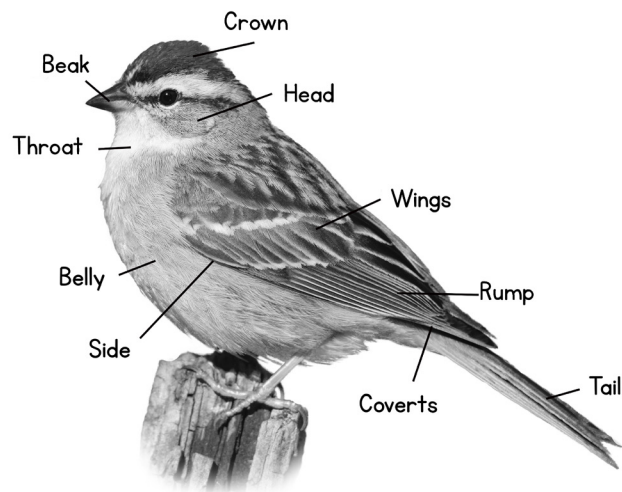
# Beginner's Birding Guide



# Welcome to Waco Mammoth National Monument

Here in Texas we have an incredible diversity of birds—more than 650 species! This book is designed to introduce you to common or iconic birds here at Waco Mammoth and get you started on your own birding adventure!

## Parts of a bird:



### What you will need:

Water



Binoculars



Bird ID Book or App



Sun Protection



## My Bird Observations

I think this bird is called:	
Season:	Draw your bird here:
Size:	
Color:	
Patterns:	
What was it doing?	

I think this bird is called:	
Season:	Draw your bird here:
Size:	
Color:	
Patterns:	
What was it doing?	

## My Bird Observations

I think this bird is called:	
Season:	Draw your bird here:
Size:	
Color:	
Patterns:	
What was it doing?	

I think this bird is called:	
Season:	Draw your bird here:
Size:	
Color:	
Patterns:	
What was it doing?	

## Getting Started Identifying Birds

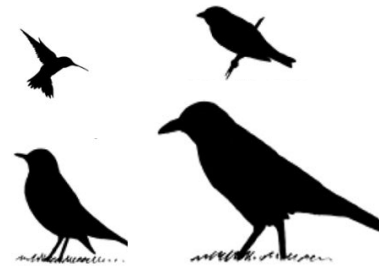
### Location, Habitat, and Season:

You're unlikely to see a common winter bird in the summer, or a grassland bird in the forest. However, birds are highly mobile and can turn up in places that you would not expect!



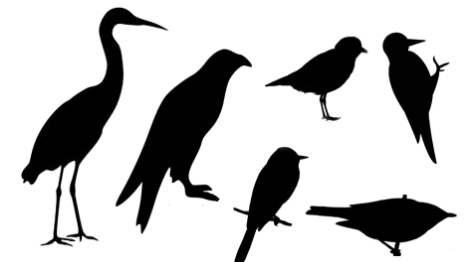
### Size:

It can be hard to tell how big a bird is, but try and use familiar objects to get a general idea. This book, is 8 1/2 inches tall- the length of an American Robin or the size of an Eastern Screech Owl.



### Shape:

Is your bird round like a pigeon? Does it stand up straight like a robin? How long is the tail, wings or beak? A bird's shape can tell you what group of birds it belongs to, and help you narrow down your ID.



### Color and Markings:

What color is your bird overall? Is it multiple colors? What parts of it's body are different colors? Does it have any distinct markings, like a mask or spots?



# Carolina Chickadee

This book  
5.5 in x 8.5 in



## Vocalization

Song: descending notes "fee-bee-fee-bay"

Call: "chick-a-dee-dee-dee"



Photo By: iNaturalist User Dan Pancamo

These little, round headed birds are a common sight around the park. Carolina Chickadees tend to travel in small noisy flocks that often attract other, less common birds so keep an eye out near the edges of the group for shyer species taking advantage of the protection the flock provides. Chickadees also call out when they find a good source of food.

## Habitat

These birds can be found all over the park but are more common near water and in the live oaks along the Mammoth Trail- often in mixed flocks.

## Abundance

Winter:	Common
Spring:	Common
Summer:	Common
Fall:	Common

## My Bird Observations

I think this bird is called:

Season:

Size:

Color:

Patterns:

What was it doing?

Draw your bird here:

I think this bird is called:

Season:

Size:

Color:

Patterns:

What was it doing?

Draw your bird here:



## My Bird Observations

I think this bird is called:	
Season:	Draw your bird here:
Size:	
Color:	
Patterns:	
What was it doing?	

I think this bird is called:	
Season:	Draw your bird here:
Size:	
Color:	
Patterns:	
What was it doing?	

## Tufted/Black Crested Titmouse

This book  
5.5 in x 8.5 in



### Vocalization

Song: A steady  
"pee-oh pee-oh  
pee-oh"

Call: A buzzing  
scolding noise.



Photo By: iNaturalist User Greg Lasley

These little, active, grey, songbirds are sure to stand out. The Titmice in Central Texas will commonly form hybrids between Tufted and Black-Crested Titmice. Hybrids are identified by their brown foreheads and grey crests. Other birds often flock with titmice and use them as a lookouts for predators so keep an eye out for rarer birds around flocks of titmice.

### Habitat

These birds can be found all over the park, but are more common near water and in the live oaks along the Mammoth Trail- often in mixed flocks.

### Abundance

Winter:	Common
Spring:	Common
Summer:	Common
Fall:	Common

# Northern Cardinal



## Vocalization

Song: Common phrases include “cheer-a-dote-cheer-a-dote” and “what-cheer what-cheer”



Photo By: iNaturalist User Jen Goellnitz

Often called “redbirds” for their vibrant color, these mid-size songbirds are easy to spot. Females are slightly duller, with olive green or rusty bodies and red on the crests and wings. Rarely a Cardinal will be born entirely yellow instead of the normal red. These Cardinals lack an enzyme that lets them make red pigment from the food they eat.

## Habitat

Abundant across the park, look for males singing in the tops of trees staking out their territory. Cardinals are one of the few birds that sing all year.

## Abundance

Winter:	Abundant
Spring:	Abundant
Summer:	Abundant
Fall:	Abundant



# Sandhill Crane

Sandhill Cranes are the most abundant species of crane in the world. Their flocks are easy to spot in the fall as they migrate south to the Texas Gulf Coast. Sometimes you can hear the flock calling before you can see them! Listen for their musical, rattling calls and look up to find a flock soaring overhead. While Sandhill Cranes are a common species in Texas, the Mississippi Sandhill Crane and the related Whooping Crane are endangered.

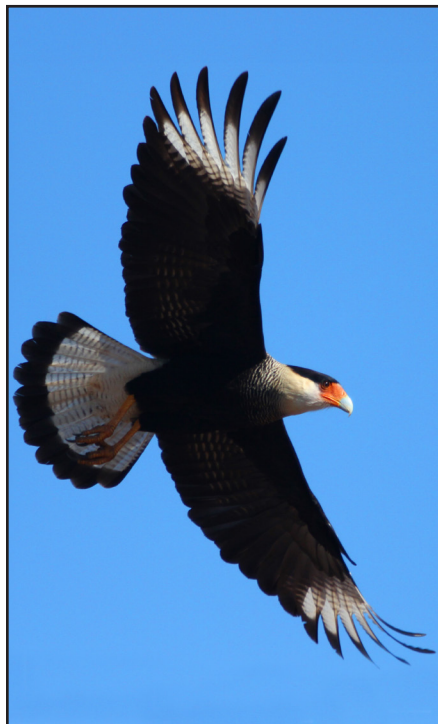
## Great Egret

Great Egrets are one of the largest species of heron in North America, and the largest white heron in Texas. Sometimes mistakenly called cranes, herons can be distinguished by their generally smaller size and the way they tuck their heads back against their body and coil their neck while flying. Other white herons common in the area are Snowy Egrets and Cattle Egrets, but only the darker Great Blue Heron is as large.



## Bald Eagle

This raptor is the National Bird of the United States of America. Bald Eagles are becoming more common after nearly disappearing in the 1950s. You can recognize this bird by its distinctive black-and-white coloring and its massive wingspan. Bald Eagles get more common in Texas in winter as northern birds migrate South, but some live here year-round.



## Crested Caracara

This unusual bird soars like a hawk, walks like a turkey and eats carrion like a vulture, but it's actually a giant falcon. It can be recognized in flight by its white tail feathers with black tips, white wingtips, white head with a bright orange beak, and black crest. Its wings are also more square-shaped than other raptors. The Caracara is becoming more common in Texas as its range extends North, but this unique falcon is threatened in Florida as its habitat is lost to development and climate change.

## Ruby-Crowned Kinglet

This book  
5.5 in x 8.5 in



### Vocalization

Song: "zee-zee-zee" and "tee-da-leet tee-da-leet" calls are higher pitched than other birds



Photo By: iNaturalist User Nigel

Kinglets are one of the smallest birds in the United States. Only hummingbirds are regularly smaller. The bright red crown of these birds are only present in males and are often hidden against their heads. These birds move nearly constantly as they search for insects in trees. The related Golden-Crowned Kinglet has a striped head and more visible "crown."

### Habitat

Kinglets are winter residents of Central Texas and leave almost as soon as the weather gets warm. They're common in mixed flocks across the park.

### Abundance

Winter:	Common
Spring:	Rare
Summer:	Absent
Fall:	Uncommon



# Eastern Phoebe

This book  
5.5 in x 8.5 in



## Vocalization

Song: "fee-bee  
fee-be-bee"  
repeated often  
and loudly  
Call: a sharp  
"chip"



Photo By: iNaturalist User timbojohn

Phoebes are part of a large group called "Tyrant Flycatchers" which has more than 400 species in the Americas. Eastern Phoebes are the only species regularly present at Waco Mammoth, but other common flycatcher species in Central Texas are the Great Crested, Scissor-Tailed and Least Flycatchers, the Kingbirds, and the Wood-Pewees.

## Habitat

Phoebes like prominent positions to call from, so check out the tops of trees around the parking lot, or mixed flock groups on the Eagle Trail.

## Abundance

Winter:	Uncommon
Spring:	Uncommon
Summer:	Uncommon
Fall:	Uncommon

# Red-Shouldered Hawk

This hawk loves forests and wooded creeks and uses its short wings for maneuverability while hunting. This hawk is easily identified by its barred feathers and red-colored "shoulders." Often heard more than seen, listen for this hawk's distinctive "kee-ah kee-ah kee-ah" call. Be careful identifying hawks only from calls. Blue Jays and other birds often mimic the sound of hawks and can confuse even experienced birders.



# Red-Tailed Hawk

America's most familiar hawk, the Red-Tailed Hawk loves open country but can be found almost anywhere. This hawk is dark brown on top, white below and has a red tail, but some color morphs can be darker or lighter. Smaller birds will often try to drive off hawks. So keep an eye out if the birds around you start to get noisy, there may be a hawk nearby. The "eagle scream" most people assume is the call of the Bald Eagle is actually the call of the Red-Tailed Hawk!



# Flyover Sightings

Sometimes, all you see of a bird is the underside as it flies overhead. It can be difficult to tell the size of a bird in flight. So, as you observe these birds take note of the shape and color of its wings, patterns on the belly and tail, and the way it holds its body. Here are some of our common flyovers:



## Turkey Vulture

Also often called a “Turkey Buzzard,” these birds help out by cleaning up dead animals. Look for the dark body, white feathers on the wings and tail, and the red head. Vultures also hold their wings in a distinct “V” shape, spread their feathers like fingers and rock back-and-forth while soaring.

## Black Vulture

Smaller and more social than the Turkey Vulture, these vultures are most often seen flying to their roost in large numbers. Black Vultures are all black except for white patches on their wingtips. They are becoming more common in Texas as their range expands North from Mexico.



# Red-Bellied Woodpecker



## Vocalization

Call: “churr-churr churr-churr” or a single “chrrrrroi”  
Listen for it’s “tat-tat-tat-tat” drumming



Photo By: iNaturalist User pluvierdodu

One of Central Texas’ larger woodpeckers, the Red-Bellied Woodpecker is somewhat confusingly named. The males have a red hood while females and juveniles are more plain. Watch for their bouncing flight and bold colors, and listen for their loud calls. Woodpeckers communicate by “drumming” or banging their heads on anything that makes a loud sound.

## Habitat

Look for these birds near large trees , especially ones that are dead or have dead branches which provide food and nesting sites for several species.

## Abundance

Winter:	Common
Spring:	Common
Summer:	Common
Fall:	Common

# Blue-Headed Vireo

This book  
5.5 in x 8.5 in



## Vocalization

Call: a nasal rattling referred to as a "scold," a nasal "nyaah" and a large variety of trills and shrieks



Photo By: iNaturalist User Susan Elliot

This vireo is a winter resident and migrant in Texas. The Blue-Headed Vireos at Waco Mammoth likely come to the park from the Appalachians, but some of them might be stopping through on their journey from Canada to destinations as far South as Nicaragua! These shy birds eat mostly insects, but some populations eat fruit during the winter.

## Habitat

These birds have been seen in trees close to the Welcome Center. Keep an eye out on the edge of groups of Chickadees and Titmice for this shy bird.

## Abundance

Winter:	Uncommon
Spring:	Uncommon
Summer:	Absent
Fall:	Uncommon

# Doves and Pigeons

Doves and pigeons are stout-bodied, round headed birds common across the world. The most familiar species to many is the Domestic Pigeon, but five other species live in Central Texas: the two below, and the small Inca Dove and Common Ground Dove, and the introduced Eurasian Collared Dove.

## White-Winged Dove

These desert doves are becoming more common in Central Texas as their range expands North. Note the prominent white on the wing and listen for their "who-cooks-for-you" call that sounds scratchier than the mourning dove.

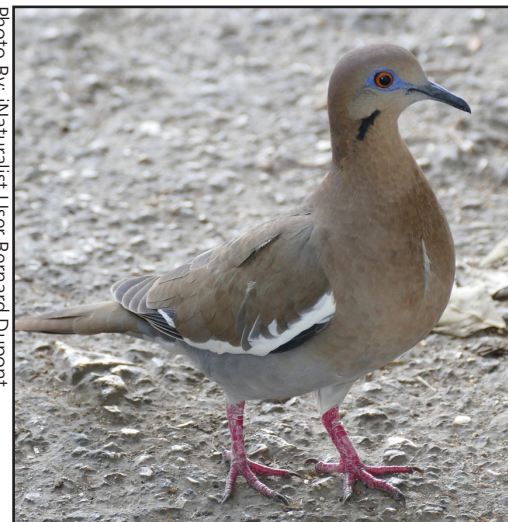


Photo By: iNaturalist User Bernard Dupont

## Mourning Dove

The most common dove native to North America since the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. Drab brown all over with brown spots, and white bordering the tail. Listen for their distinctive "coooOoo-woo-woo-woo" song and whistling wings on takeoff.



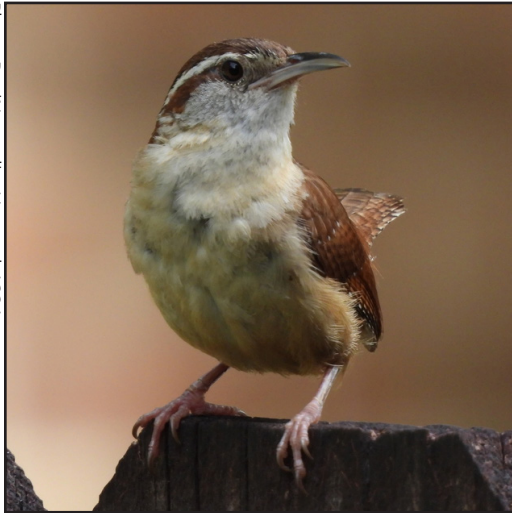
Photo By: iNaturalist User Jaime M. Simancas



# Wrens

Wrens are small birds with big voices, and sing a wide variety of songs (some species up to three dozen). Wrens have stout bodies, curved beaks, and a tail held up at an angle like a check-mark. Carolina and Bewick's Wrens are common here year-round, but other wrens visit Central Texas in winter.

Photo By: iNaturalist User ncb1221



## Carolina Wren

Carolina Wrens are the second-largest wrens living in North America. They're easy to identify by their rusty red/brown backs, orange bellies, and white "eyebrow" stripes. A common phrase in their complex song sounds like "tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle."

## Bewick's Wren

Bewick's Wren is smaller and greyer than the related Carolina Wrens. Here in Texas and the Western U.S. Bewick's Wrens are still common, but their numbers in the East have plummeted in the last few decades. This may be due to an increase in the number of House Wrens.



Photo By: iNaturalist User Zach Schiff

# White-Eyed Vireo

This book  
5.5 in x 8.5 in



## Vocalization

Song: a buzzing nasal "picka-chicka-weeeyou" or "spit! see-if-I-care spit!" repeated often.



Photo By: iNaturalist User Jose Antonio Linage Espinoza

A summer visitor and regular breeder at Waco Mammoth, the White-Eyed Vireo is one of our most common seasonal breeders. While it's named for the white ring around its eye, this bird's most prominent facial feature is its yellow mask. Often heard more than seen, some hot days the White-Eyed Vireo is one of the only birds still frequently calling.

## Habitat

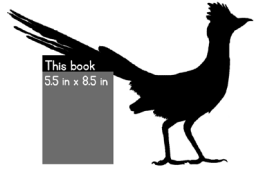
Common throughout the park, these birds nest in thick brush. You can see them crossing the trail ahead of you watching until you pass their nest.

## Abundance

Winter:	Absent
Spring:	Common
Summer:	Abundant
Fall:	Rare



# Greater Roadrunner



## Vocalization

Song: a deep  
"coo-coo-coo"  
Call: a bark like  
a yapping coyote,  
and a rattle made  
by their bill.



Photo By: iNaturalist User Jody Shugart

# Painted Bunting



## Vocalization

Song: a sweet,  
rambling, high  
pitched series of  
musical phrases  
repeated often.  
Call: a soft "plik"



Photo By: iNaturalist User Francesco Veronesi

Unlike on television, real Roadrunners are only fairly quick and never say "Meep-Meep." These giant ground cuckoos stay mostly silent as they hunt for large insects, mice, toads and their favorite prey-snakes and lizards. They've even been observed killing venomous snakes! While these birds mostly stick to the ground they're not actually flightless..

## Habitat

We see roadrunners all over the park, most often in winter when prey is harder to find and the undergrowth dies back. They're easiest to spot on the roadside.

## Abundance

Winter:	Common
Spring:	Uncommon
Summer:	Uncommon
Fall:	Uncommon

The most colorful bird in the United States, Painted Buntings brighten up Central Texas every summer before migrating to Mexico for the winter. Males are bold and eye-catching while females are a drab yellow and more secretive. These beautiful birds are in decline because of capture for the illegal pet trade, feather hunters and habitat destruction.

## Habitat

It's easiest to see these colorful birds on the edges of open areas like the parking lot. Listen for the males singing high in trees from May to July.

## Abundance

Winter:	Absent
Spring:	Uncommon
Summer:	Common
Fall:	Absent