Welcome to Birding at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge

More than 250 species of birds have been recorded in or near Balcones Canyonlands NWR, a large area for relatively small area. One reason for this diversity: The Refuge lies in the zone where the east meets the west. Such typical western birds as the black-throated sparrow reach the eastern edge of their ranges here, while many eastern birds such as the red-bellied woodpecker approach their western limits. For visiting birders, the most interesting species are two endangered songbirds, the black-capped vireo and the golden-cheeked warbler. With planning and a little luck, it’s possible—though by no means guaranteed—to find both of them in a single morning (see elsewhere in this brochure for hints on finding these species).

**Birds of Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge**

Black-capped vireo. © Greg W. Lasley. Used by permission

**Black-capped vireo.** Areas. Some species typical of nearby urban areas are seldom encountered within the Refuge proper.

Species known or suspected to breed in or near the Refuge area are marked with an asterisk (*).

**Nomenclature and sequence conform to the 7th edition of the Check-list of North American Birds of the American Ornithologists’ Union and its supplements through July 2012.**

**Explanation of Symbols:**

**Seasons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Winter (W)</th>
<th>Early Fall (EF)</th>
<th>Late Spring (LS)</th>
<th>Summer (Su)</th>
<th>Late Fall (LF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Detectability categories:**

- **C** Common (you’ll always find this species in appropriate habitat, often with minimal searching)
- **F** Fairly common (should find it most of the time)
- **U** Uncommon (might find it)
- **R** Rare (probably won’t find it)
- **I** Irregular (a species present some years, absent others)
- **X** Accidental (not expected to occur again) (Believed to occur at this season, but status uncertain)
- **Hyp** Hypothetical, reported, but with limited/no documentation

**Area Covered**

A circle approximately 16 miles in diameter centered on the Refuge, including all Refuge tracts, the City of Lago Vista, and most of nearby Jonestown, but excluding the area south of Lake Travis. Included in this area are northwestern Travis County, southwestern Williamson county, and part of southeastern Burnet County.

**Notes**

These detectability categories apply to the likelihood of finding (by sight or sound) a given species in appropriate habitat—**not** to the species’ actual abundance. For example, wild turkeys are rather easily detectable in spring when males are gobbling, but they’re often harder to find the rest of the year. Similarly, hatchlings, though more numerous than red-tailed hawks, are encountered far less often. So hatchlings rate a “C,” while red-tailed hawk gets an “F” or “C.”

Irrugitive winter species such as pine siskins and breeding species such as Cassin’s sparrows are examples which vary so much between years that they are regarded as “Irregular.” Species naturally vary in abundance within the limits of our seasonal categories; each is marked with the highest abundance category that an observer might expect to see at that season. Most species vary widely in abundance among the diverse habitats within the Refuge. Some species occur very locally on the Refuge and may not be encountered in the regular public use

**Birds of Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge**

**Spoonbills**

- White-faced Ibis
- Roseate Spoonbill

**New World Vultures**

- Black Vulture*
- Turkey Vulture*

**Hawks, Kites, Eagles, and Allies**

- Osprey
- White-tailed Kite
- Mississippi Kite
- Bald Eagle
- Northern Harrier
- Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Cooper’s Hawk*
- Red-shouldered Hawk*
- Broad-winged Hawk
- Swainson’s Hawk
- Zone-tailed Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk*
- “Harlan’s”
- Ferruginous Hawk
- Golden Eagle

**Caracaras and Falcons**

- Crested Caracara*
- American Kestrel
- Merlin
- Peregrine Falcon
- Prairie Falcon

**Rails, Gallinules, and Coots**

- Sora
- Purple Gallinule
- American Coot

**Cranes**

- Sandhill Crane
- Whooping Crane

**Plovers**

- American Golden Plover
- Killdeer*

**Sandpipers, Phalaropes, and Allies**

- Spotted Sandpiper
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- Upland Sandpiper
- Long-billed Curlew
- Western Sandpiper
- Least Sandpiper
- White-rumped Sandp.
- Baird’s Sandpiper
- Pectoral Sandpiper
- Wilson’s Snipe
- Amer. Woodcock
- Wilson’s Phalarope

**Gulls and Terns**

- Franklin’s Gull
- Ring-billed Gull
- Herring Gull
- Forster’s Tern

**Pigeons and Doves**

- Rock Pigeon*
- Eur. Collared-Dove*
- White-winged Dove*
- Mourning Dove*
- Inca Dove*
- Common Ground-Dove*

**Parrots**

- Monk Parakeet

**Cuckoos and Roadrunners**

- Yellow-billed Cuckoo*
- Black-billed Cuckoo
- Greater Roadrunner*

**Barn Owls**

- Barn Owl*
- Eastern Screech-Owl*
- Great Horned Owl*
- Burrowing Owl
- Barred Owl*
- Long-eared Owl
- Short-eared Owl

**New World Vultures**

- Red-tailed Hawk*
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Goatsuckers
- Common Nighthawk*
  F U U
- Common Poorwill*
  U U U U R
- Chuck-will’s-widow*  C U
- Whip-poor-will  R R

Swifts
- Chimney Swift*  U F F R

Hummingbirds
- Green Violetear  X
- Ruby-throated Hum.  R F U F
- Black-chinned Hum.*  R C C R
- Broad-tailed Hum.  X X
- Rufous Hummingbird  R R R R

Kingfishers
- Belted Kingfisher*  U U U U U
- Green Kingfisher  R R

Woodpeckers
- Lewis's Woodpecker  X X X
- Red-headed Wdp.*  R
- Golden-fronted Wdp.*  R R R R
- Red-billed Wdp.*  R R R R
- Yellow-belled Sapsucker  R X R
- Red-naped Sapsucker  X
- Ladder-backed Wdp.*  F F F F F F
- Downy Woodpecker*  R R R R
- Northern Flicker  R X U

Tyrant Flycatchers
- Olive-sided Flycatcher  R X R
- Eastern Wood-Pewee*  U U U
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher  C X
- Acadian Flycatcher  R
- Willow Flycatcher  R X R
- “Trails” Flycatcher  R ?
- Least Flycatcher  F R U X
- Empidonax species  F R F
- Black Phoebe  X
- Eastern Phoebe*  C F F F C
- Say’s Phoebe  R X R X R
- Vermilion Flycatcher*  U U U U ? X
- Ash-throated Flyc.*  F F F R X
- Great Crested Flyc.*  F F F F F
- Western Kingbird*  F F U
- Eastern Kingbird  U R R
- Scissor-tailed Flyc.*  F C C F C C

Shrikes
- Loggerhead Shrike*  R R U F F

Vireos
- White-eyed Vireo*  C C C C X
- Bell’s Vireo*  R U U R
- Black-capped Vireo*  F F F F
- Yellow-throated Vireo*  U U U ?
- Blue-headed Vireo  R R R R
- Hutton’s Vireo  X
- Warbling Vireo  R X R
- Philadelphia Vireo  R
- Red-eyed Vireo*  F F U

Groses and Jays
- Blue Jay*  C F F F F F C
- Western Scrub-Jay*  C C C C C C C
- American Crow*  C C C C C C
- Common Raven*  F U U U F F

Larks
- Horned Lark  R

Swallows
- Purple Martin*  F F F U R
- Tree Swallow  R
- N. Rough-winged Swallow*  U U U ? X
- Bank Swallow  R R R R
- Cliff Swallow*  C C C C
- Cave Swallow*  U C C U R
- Barn Swallow*  C C C C C U X

Chickadees and Titmouse
- Carolina Chickadee*  C C C C C C C C
- Black-crested Titmouse*  C C C C C C C C

Vermillion
- Verdin*  X ? ? R ?

Bush tits
- Bushtit*  U U U U U U U

Nuthatches
- Red-breasted Nuthatch I ? I

Creepers
- Brown Creeper  R R

Wrens
- Cactus Wren*  R R R R R R
- Rock Wren  X X
- Canyon Wren*  F F F F F F
- Carolina Wren*  C C C C C C C C
- Bewick’s Wren*  C C C C C C C C
- House Wren  U R U F R
- Winter Wren  R R R
- Sedge Wren  U R R
- Marsh Wren  X R R R

Gnatcatchers
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*  F F F F F F U

Kinglets
- Golden-crowned Kinglet  R I I
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet  C U R C C

Tyrant Flycatchers
- Eastern Bluebird*  F F U U F F F
- Western Bluebird  X
- Mountain Bluebird  X
- Townsend’s Solitaire  I ?
- Veery  R
- Swainson’s Thrush  U ?
- Hermit Thrush  U X U F
- American Robin*  C R R R C C
- Varied Thrush  X

Mockingbirds and Thrashers
- Gray Catbird  R R R R
- Northern Mockingbird*  C C C C C C
- Sage Thrasher  R R
- Brown Thrasher  R R R R
- Long-billed Thrasher  X X
- Curve-billed Thrasher  R R

Starlings
- European Starling*  C C C C C C

Pipits
- American Pipit  R R U
- Sprague’s Pipit  U R U

Waxwings
- Cedar Waxwing  C F C X C

Longspurs
- Chestnut-cock.Parlager. I

Wood Warblers
- Ovenbird  R R ?
- Louisiana Waterthrush  R R R R
- Northern Waterthrush  R F X
- Golden-winged Warbler  R R
- Black-winged Warbler  X
- Black-and-white Warbler  X
- Prothonotary Warbler  X
- Swainson’s Warbler  X
- Tennessee Warbler  X
- Orange-crowned Warbler F F F F F F
- Nashville Warbler  F C U F
- MacGillivray’s Warbler*  F F F F F F
- Mourning Warbler  R R R
- Common Yellowthroat  U R
- Hooded Warbler  X
- American Redstart  U R U
- Northern Parula  R R
- Magnolia Warbler  U ?
- Bay-breasted Warbler  R R
- Blackburnian Warbler  R X
- Yellow Warbler  F C
- Chestnut-sided Warbler  R ?
- Blackpoll Warbler  X
- Palm Warbler  X
- Pine Warbler  R R R
- Yellow-rumped Warbler  F U F F X
- "Myrtle"  X
- "Audubon’s"  ?
- Prairie Warbler  X
- Black-throated Gray Warbler  W X
- Golden-cheeked Warbler  ?
- Black-throated Green Warbler  U U U
- Canada Warbler  R X
- Wilson’s Warbler  U U
- Yellow-breasted Chat* R F F F F

Towhees, Sparrows, and Allies
- Spotted Towhee  C U C
- Eastern Towhee  R R R R R
- Rufous-crowned Sp.*  C C C F C F
- Canyon Towhee*  U U U U U U U
- Cassin’s Sparrow*  U X U U U U U
- Chipping Sparrow*  C F U U C C C
- Clay-colored Sparrow  U ? U R
- Brewer’s Sparrow  R R R
- Field Sparrow*  C C C F C C
- Vesper Sparrow  C F R C C
- Lark Sparrow  C C C F U C
- Black-throated Sparrow*  R C C C R R
- Lark Bunting  X
- Savannah Sparrow  C F X C C
- Grasshopper Sparrow  U U R R U R U
- Baird’s Sparrow  X
- Le Conte’s Sparrow  U R U
- Fox Sparrow  X
- Song Sparrow  F F C
- Lincoln’s Sparrow  G F C C C C C
- Savannah Sparrow  R R R R R
- White-throated Sparrow U U R F R
- Harris’s Sparrow  R U F
- White-crowned Sparrow  F C C
- Dark-eyed Junco  F R U C
- “ Slate-colored”  X U U C
- “Oregon”/“Pink-sided”  U U

Tanagers
- Summer Tanager*  R C F F
- Scarlet Tanager  R
- Western Tanager  X

Cardinals, Grosbeaks, and Buntings
- Northern Cardinal*  C C C C C C
- Pyrrhuloxia  I I I I
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak  R
- Black-headed Grosbeak  X
- Blue Grosbeak*  F F U R
- Lampl Buntings  R
- Indigo Bunting  F F F U U
- Painted Bunting*  C C R
- Dickcissel*  F I I F

Blackbirds
- Black-winged Blackbird*  F U U U F F
- Eastern Meadowlark*  C U R C C C
- Western Meadowlark  F C C
- Yellow-headed Blackbird  U
- Brewer’s Blackbird  R R I
- Common Grackle*  F F U ? ?
- Great-tailed Grackle*  F C C C F C F
- Bronzed Cowbird  R R
- Brown-headed Cowbird*  C F C C C
- Orchard Oriole*  U U U
- Bullock’s Oriole  R R
- Baltimore Oriole  U
- Scott’s Oriole*  R R R R X

Finches and Allies
- Purple Finch  R
- House Finch*  C C C C C C
- Pine Siskin  I I I I
- Lesser Goldfinch*  F F F R R R
- Common Goldfinch  U C F C

Old World Sparrows
- House Sparrow*  C C C C C C

Unconfirmed Species
- Short-tailed Hawk  X
- Costa’s Hummingbird  X
- Calliope Hummingbird  X
- Brown-crested Flycatcher  X
- Cassin’s Vireo  X
- Rufous-winged Warbler  X
- Henslow’s Sparrow  X
- Junco  X

Escaped/Released Species, Not Established
- Eun  X

Ring-necked Pheasant  X

For Additional Information
We welcome comments on this checklist. Please send them to:
Refuge Manager
Balcones Canyonlands NWR
24518 FM 1431
Marble Falls, TX 78654
512/339-4182
E-mail: fw2_rw_Balcones@fws.gov

Originally compiled by John Kelly and Chuck Sexton. Data contributed by Juan Pablo Asmus, Judy Bell, Marjorie Dearmont, Rob Ferguson, Roger Frost, Jim Gilchrist, Sheila Hargis, John Ingram, Harold Joes, John Kelly, Karen Kilfather, Bill Lybarger, Dub Lyon, Kathy McCormack, Jeff Mandy, Jean Nance, Nancy Ralagay, Roy Reinarz, Byron Stone, Paul Sunby, along with Refuge staff, members of the Friends of Balcones Canyons NWR, Travis Audubon Society, and other visitors to this Refuge.

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