



Birds of San Elijo Lagoon



Light-footed Clapper Rail
Rallus longirostris levipes
“kek kek kek kek kek”

Over 300 different bird species have been sighted at San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. Use this brochure to discover how you can identify birds with clues such as location, behavior, size, shape and field marks.

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Field Marks

In addition to size, shape, location and behavior, field marks can be used to help identify birds. If you can't identify a bird on your hike, remembering what certain parts of the bird looked like can help you identify it when you get home. On your birding adventure, try to find a bird you don't know and see if it has any of the following field marks:

Tail markings
Does the bird have white edges on its tail or a different color on the tip?

tail bars

Are there any stripes across the bird's tail?

wing bars
Does the bird have wing bars or patches?

nape
Is the bird's nape a different color?

Marsh Wren

Cistothorus palustris
trills "kek t'jek-t'ek-t'r"

belly
What color is the bird's belly?

eyestripe
Does the bird have a stripe through the eye?

side
Does the bird have coloring on the sides?

crow
Does the bird have a colored "cap" or a crest on its head?

breast
Does the breast have speckles or bands of color?

eyebrow
Does the bird have an eyebrow? What color?

throat
Is the bird's throat a different color?

beak
What shape and color are the beak?

What kind of bird is that...

When trying to identify a bird, the first things to look for are location and behavior. Is the bird up high making noise or wading in the water? Next, think about size and shape. Is it big like an osprey or small like a goldfinch? Does it have pointy wings or a long tail? Finally, you can use field marks to identify birds – flip to the side panel to discover how.

Check off each bird you find on your hike today!

in the shrubs and trees?

The shrubs and trees at San Elijo Lagoon provide food, perches and nest sites for many birds. Hummingbirds make their tiny nests in the swaying branches of the trees while finches eat seeds from the flowering shrubs. Gnatcatchers move amongst the shrubs catching insects, while small woodland hawks use sturdier tree branches for perches. **Look into the trees and shrubs. How many different birds can you find? What parts of the tree or shrub are the birds using?**



Anna's Hummingbird
Calypte anna
scratchy "sturee sturee"



American Goldfinch
Spinus tristis
"per-chik-o-ry" in flight



California Gnatcatcher
Poliophtila californica
nasal "mee-eeew"



Cooper's Hawk
Accipiter cooperii
nasal "pek, pek"



White-tailed Kite
Elanus leucurus
"eerk, eerk, sweekrrkr"



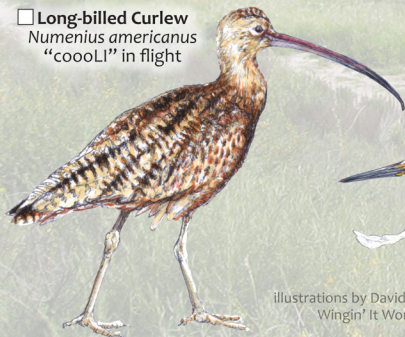
Osprey
Pandion haliaetus
"tewp, tewp, teelee, tewp"



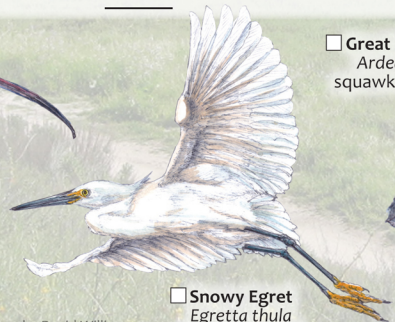
American Kestrel
Falco sparverius
"kli kli kli kli kli kli"

on the shore?

Birds that feed along the shore usually specialize in catching fish or invertebrates such as worms, crabs and snails. The long bill of the curlew probes the mudflats while herons and egrets walk along the shore stirring up the mud in search of food. **Look along the main channel for shorebirds, especially at low tide when the mudflats are exposed. How many different birds can you find? Can you tell what they are eating?**

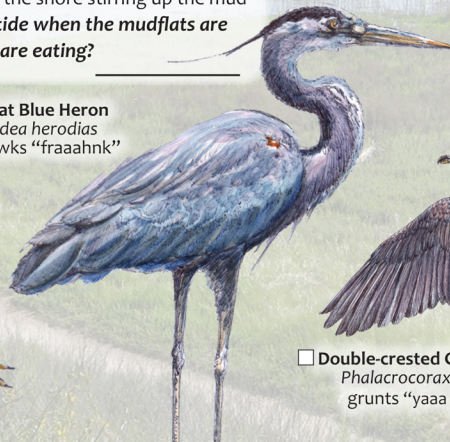


Long-billed Curlew
Numenius americanus
"cooLl!" in flight



Snowy Egret
Egretta thula
hoarse "hraaa"

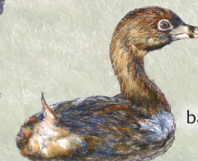
Great Blue Heron
Ardea herodias
squawks "frraaahnk"



Double-crested Cormorant
Phalacrocorax auritus
grunts "yaaa yaa ya"



Mallard
Anas platyrhynchos
"quack quack"



Pied-billed Grebe
Podilymbus podiceps
barks "ge ge gadum goam"

illustrations by David Williams,
Wingin' It Works

in the air?

Birds that spend a lot of time in the air use their strong eyesight to find food. These birds of prey often can be found perched, hovering or flying above the land and water as they search for their next meal. **Scan the sky over the wetlands and the branches of tall trees. Are there any large birds flying overhead? Are they flapping, hovering or gliding?**

in the water?

Both the fresh and salt water areas of San Elijo Lagoon are attractive to a variety of birds, making the lagoon an important part of the Pacific Flyway migration route. Birds like cormorants and pied-billed grebes are great divers and prefer to search for fish in the deeper channels of the lagoon, while dabbling ducks like mallards swim along the channel, sifting out vegetation and insects near the surface of the water. **How many different types of dabbling and diving birds can you find?**