



National Park Service

ARTICLE

Landbirds of Pinnacles National Park

[Pinnacles National Park \(https://www.nps.gov/pinn/\)](https://www.nps.gov/pinn/)



An Oak Titmouse, one of the species of birds censused at Pinnacles.

NPS / Gavin Emmons

Importance

Pinnacles National Park contains large areas of undisturbed chaparral and woodland, as well as riparian corridors. These provide critical habitat for central coast birds.

The protected status of Pinnacles and the quantity, quality, and variety of its habitats offer a unique opportunity for bird studies in California's central coast. In 1996, the National Park Service (NPS) identified birds as a major component of ecosystems to be inventoried and monitored. NPS had conducted a systematic bird inventory at Pinnacles in 1984-1985, and repeated these surveys in 1998-1999. In 2000, a presidential decree added 8,000 more acres of land to Pinnacles. In 2001 and 2002, NPS contracted with Point Blue Conservation Science to inventory the new lands as well as some historic areas not previously surveyed. These data were meant to complement existing data from the interior of the park. This inventory data provided baseline information for the formation of the riparian landbird monitoring program at Pinnacles National Park, which initiated in 2015. NPS staff also record confirmed observations by employees and Visitors.

Inventory Methods

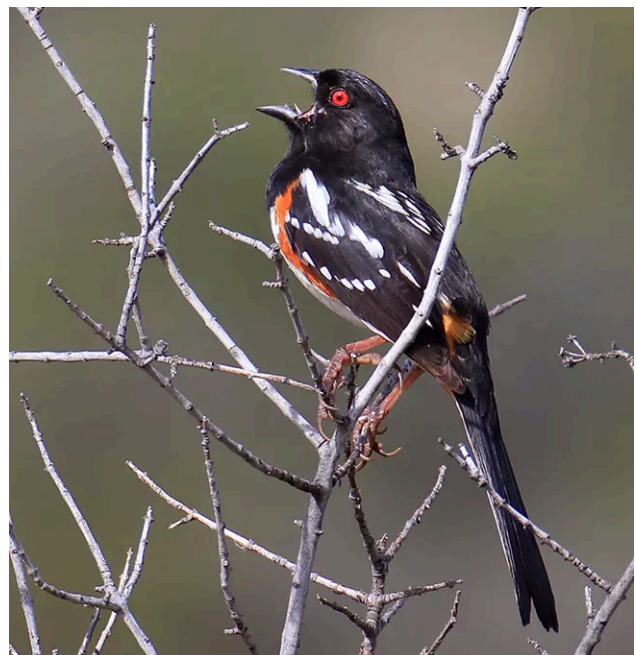
NPS staff undertook landbird surveys at 71 point count stations in 1984-1985, and 66 of those same stations in 1998-1999. During 2001-2002, Point Blue surveyed nine transects totaling 92 point count stations.

Researchers established point count transects and stations in three major habitat types: chaparral, pine-oak woodland, and riparian woodland. At each point count station, researchers conducted a five-minute census during peak singing hours, noting songs, calls, and visual detections. During the 1984-1985 and 1998-1999 surveys, researchers censused each station six times in winter and six times in spring. During the 2001-2002 survey, researchers censused each station two to three times in the spring only. The bird detection data allowed researchers to derive information on bird diversity, species richness (a count of the different bird species present), and relative abundance. Species detected beyond 50 meters from each point and species not well sampled by the point count method (raptors, swifts, swallows, waterbirds, shorebirds, etc.) were not included in statistical analysis. The 2001-2002 survey also established 24 area search plots (17 surveyed in winter and 7 surveyed in breeding season) to augment the point count data and inventory winter landbirds.

Inventory Findings

Researchers recorded a total of 113 bird species through the three inventories (83 in 1985, 93 in 1999, and 96 in 2002). The certified bird list for Pinnacles, as of 2009, includes 180 species present in the park based on these inventories, monitoring, and other confirmed sightings.

- The Western Meadowlark and Yellow-billed Magpie were among the birds observed in 2002 (but not in 1985 or 1999), likely as a result of the expansion of park lands.
- In the 2002 point count and area search surveys, 60 species were found in chaparral, 68 in pine-oak woodland, and 74 in riparian areas. In each of the three point count inventories (1985, 1999, 2002), riparian woodlands featured the highest species richness, or number of species observed.
- Although chaparral was low in species richness in all three inventories, eight species were more common in chaparral than in other habitats in the 2002 inventory.
- 37% of the bird species known to occur at Pinnacles have been recorded only through observations by employees and visitors, including during the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Please help us by reporting any unusual wildlife sightings.



Spotted Towhee, singing from territorial perch.

NPS /Gavin Emmons

Species listed as "Present in Park" on the 2009 Pinnacles certified bird list:

Mallard	Killdeer	Acorn Woodpecker
Hooded Merganser	Spotted Sandpiper	Red-breasted Sapsucker
Common Merganser	Greater Yellowlegs	Nuttall's Woodpecker
Ring-necked Pheasant	Lesser Yellowlegs	Downy Woodpecker
Wild Turkey	Western Sandpiper	Hairy Woodpecker
Mountain Quail	Least Sandpiper	Northern Flicker
California Quail	Baird's Sandpiper	Chukar
Common Loon	Common Snipe	Pileated Woodpecker
Pied-billed Grebe	Black-legged Kittiwake	Olive-sided Flycatcher
Western Grebe	Rock Pigeon	Western Wood-Pewee
American White Pelican	Band-tailed Pigeon	Willow Flycatcher
Double-crested Cormorant	White-winged Dove	Hammond's Flycatcher
Great Blue Heron	Mourning Dove	Pacific-slope Flycatcher
Great Egret	Greater Roadrunner	Black Phoebe
Green Heron	Barn Owl	Say's Phoebe
Turkey Vulture	Western Screech-Owl	Ash-throated Flycatcher
California Condor	Great Horned Owl	Western Kingbird
Osprey	Northern Pygmy-Owl	Loggerhead Shrike
White-tailed Kite	Burrowing Owl	Bell's Vireo
Bald Eagle	Long-eared Owl	Gray Vireo
Northern Harrier	Northern Saw-whet Owl	Cassin's Vireo
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Common Poorwill	Hutton's Vireo
Cooper's Hawk	Black Swift	Warbling Vireo
Red-shouldered Hawk	White-throated Swift	Steller's Jay
Rough-legged Hawk	Black-chinned Hummingbird	Western Scrub
Golden Eagle	Anna's Hummingbird	Jay Clark's Nutcracker
American Kestrel	Costa's Hummingbird	Yellow-billed Magpie
Merlin	Calliope Hummingbird	American Crow
Peregrine Falcon	Rufous Hummingbird	Common Raven
Prairie Falcon	Allen's Hummingbird	Tree Swallow
Virginia Rail	Belted Kingfisher	Violet-green Swallow
American Coot	Lewis' Woodpecker	Northern Rough-winged Swallow

Cliff Swallow	California Thrasher	Sage Sparrow
Barn Swallow	European Starling	Grasshopper Sparrow
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Cedar Waxwing	Fox Sparrow
Oak Titmouse	Phainopepla	Song Sparrow
Bushtit	Golden-winged Warbler	Lincoln's Sparrow
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Orange-crowned Warbler	White-throated Sparrow
White-breasted Nuthatch	Nashville Warbler	White-crowned Sparrow
Pygmy Nuthatch	Yellow Warbler	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Brown Creeper	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Dark-eyed Junco
Rock Wren	Black-throated Gray Warbler	Black-headed Grosbeak
Canyon Wren	Townsend's Warbler	Lazuli Bunting
Bewick's Wren	Hermit Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
House Wren	American Redstart	Western Meadowlark
Winter Wren	Northern Waterthrush	Brewer's Blackbird
American Dipper	Macgillivray's Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Common Yellowthroat	Hooded Oriole
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Hooded Warbler	Bullock's Oriole
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Wilson's Warbler	Purple Finch
Western Bluebird	Yellow-breasted Chat	Cassin's Finch
Mountain Bluebird	Western Tanager	House Finch
Townsend's Solitaire	Green-tailed Towhee	Pine Siskin
Swainson's Thrush	Spotted Towhee	Lesser Goldfinch
Hermit Thrush	California Towhee	Lawrence's Goldfinch
American Robin	Rufous-crowned Sparrow	American Goldfinch
Varied Thrush	Chipping Sparrow	Evening Grosbeak
Wrentit	Black-chinned Sparrow	House Sparrow
Northern Mockingbird	Lark Sparrow	

Additional Resources

[Contact Information \(https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/contactus.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/contactus.htm)

Links

[San Francisco Bay Area Inventory & Monitoring Network \(https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/landbirds.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/landbirds.htm)

[Pacific Coast Science & Learning Center \(https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/landbirds.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/landbirds.htm)

[Monitoring Protocol \(https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2242376\)](https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2242376) - Download from NPS Data Store

[Pinnacles Bird Page \(https://www.nps.gov/pinn/learn/nature/birds.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/pinn/learn/nature/birds.htm) - Download the Pinnacles Bird checklist (with breeding status in park and abundance by month and habitat)

[Audubon Christmas Bird Count \(http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count\)](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count)
Haff, T.M., G. Ballard, G.R. Geupel, and D. Humple. 2003. [Landbird inventory of the Pinnacles National Monument. A Final Report to the National Park Service. \(http://www.sfnps.org/download_product/1730/0\)](http://www.sfnps.org/download_product/1730/0)Point Blue Conservation Science.
[San Francisco Bay Area Network Species Lists \(https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/species-lists.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/species-lists.htm) - view Certified Species lists including residency, abundance, and native/non-native status.

Summary by Alison Williams, San Francisco Bay Area Inventory & Monitoring Network, April 2009. Updated December 2017.

[Download PDF \(https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/548483\)](https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/548483) from the NPS Data Store



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