

## “Los Angeles Specialties”

The list below includes species that are sought-after by visiting birders, including those that are hard to find elsewhere in the U.S. Some are hard to find here as well, but occur in known areas and at predictable times of year.

Codes:

1 = Found within a few minutes of LAX, such that a 2-hour trip could reasonably expect to see one.

2 = Found within about an hour's drive of most of the Los Angeles area, so could be seen in a half-day tour, either to the coast or to the foothills (but usually not both).

3 = Requires a full day of birding, either because they occur far from Los Angeles, or because additional effort is usually involved, such as a trip to the high mountains, or a mountains-to-coast run.

4 = Requires a very long day (dawn to dusk) or an overnight stay (additional charges may apply; see “Rates”).

a = Present year-round

b = Present seasonally (e.g., winter, summer or in migration)

c = Hard to find even when present

Eurasian Wigeon (2c) One or two usually winter in the Los Angeles Basin, at city parks.

Cinnamon Teal (1b/2a) Local resident in freshwater marsh habitat, including the major rivers/vegetated flood-control channels. More widespread as a migrant and most numerous from late summer through early winter.

Mountain Quail (2c) Resident in rugged mountains surrounding Los Angeles, but rarely seen; easily heard in spring when males are calling. A full day driving dirt roads in the foothills or desert edge is the best way to intercept these birds, still usually just glimpsed for just a few seconds as they cross a road, or creep down to a spring to drink.

California Quail (2a) Resident in larger patches of open space throughout Los Angeles, but not reliably found unless coming to a feeding station. Can be seen in big flocks in winter (or with young in late summer), even in picnic areas near town (e.g., Griffith Park, Topanga State Park), but can require a full day of birding/hiking through fairly rugged habitat.

Pacific Loon (1b) Uncommon and irregularly present along coast (inshore ocean waters).

Eared Grebe (1b) Common in winter/spring along coast and on large reservoirs.

Western Grebe/Clark's Grebe (1b) Western Grebe is common in winter/spring (irregular summer/fall) along coast and on larger reservoirs; a few Clark's Grebe occur in these rafts of birds.

PELAGIC SPECIES Only a handful of true pelagic species may be seen well from shore in Los Angeles. **Black-vented Shearwater** can be abundant from fall through winter, and off beaches north of Los Angeles, **Sooty Shearwater** can be seen in summer. **Parasitic Jaeger** can drop by larger flocks of cormorants and shearwaters when these are present. Other shearwaters, alcids, and storm-petrels are almost never seen well from shore near Los Angeles, but several can be common as close as a few hundred meters out in season, and may be observed by any boat that reaches these waters (e.g., ferry to Catalina Island, whale-watching, or party-fishing boats). An Island Packers tour of Santa Cruz Island is a good way to see the resident endemic **Island Scrub-Jay** and a few pelagic species. A brief whale-watching cruise may only net one or two.

Brandt's Cormorant (1b) Irregularly abundant along coast, numbers highly dependent on prey availability.

Pelagic Cormorant (1b) Uncommon most of year, in small numbers, along coast.

Brown Pelican (1a) Common most of year along immediate coast.

Least Bittern (4) Resident in extensive reedbeds around the Salton Sea, Colorado River, and very locally along the coast, where seeing one usually involves pure luck (or a long wait).

California Condor (3c) Re-introduced birds are resident in small numbers in rugged mountains northwest of Los Angeles, but require a full day to devote to driving/waiting for one to fly over, or a strenuous hike (or both).

White-tailed Kite (1b/2a) Localized in areas of extensive grassland, mainly on the outskirts of the Los Angeles Basin, but can be reliably found in fall/early winter in areas like Bolsa Chica Ecological Area and the Oxnard Plain.

Ferruginous Hawk (3b) Winters in small numbers in agricultural areas of the Antelope Valley.

Light-footed Ridgeway's (= Clapper) Rail (2b) Resident in coastal saltmarshes in Orange County, but not always visible. Other local rails including Sora and Virginia Rail, which are present most of the year but usually impossible to see.

Prairie Falcon (3b) Breeds in very small numbers in cliffs at the desert's edge; more widespread in winter in agricultural areas of the Antelope Valley, but easy to miss.

"Rock-pipers" (1b) A group of shorebirds/sandpipers closely tied to rocky shore habitat may be seen on the immediate coast, with **Black Turnstone** and **Black Oystercatcher**

present nearly year-round, **Surfbird** in fall through spring, and **Wandering Tattler** mainly in spring, in very small numbers. The presence of each is unpredictable and often depends on tide (i.e., how much of rocks are exposed and if birds are feeding or roosting), and it's rare to see all four species on a single day.

Black-necked Stilt (1a) Resident in flood-control channels throughout town.

Pacific Golden-plover (2c) Irregularly found in fall (Sept.) in sod farms of the Oxnard Plain about an hour west of Los Angeles, and in very small numbers.

Mountain Plover (3c) Irregularly present in short alfalfa and plowed fields of the Antelope Valley in mid-winter (Nov. – Feb.).

Marbled Godwit (1b) Winters and migrates in large numbers along coast.

Ruff (2c) One or two are usually found each fall/winter in coastal wetlands.

**GULLS** Several species may be found in variable numbers virtually year-round on beaches and inland parks, including **Western Gull** and **California Gull**. **Heermann's Gull** occurs most of the year on beaches, though can be rare in early spring when breeding off Mexico. **Glaucous-winged Gull** and **Thayer's Gull** arrive in winter, the latter much less common. **Yellow-footed Gull** is reliable at the Salton Sea from spring through fall, with a few spending the winter at the far south end.

Elegant Tern (1b) Abundant from March through October along the coast. Other terns present at various times of year include **Least Tern** (May-August) and **Black Skimmer** (year-round in Orange County).

**OWLS/NIGHTJARS** A full day of birding may flush a **Great Horned Owl** or a **Barn Owl**, and Burrowing Owl and Lesser Nighthawk are virtually guaranteed at the Salton Sea, but most species require a special (usually nocturnal) search. **Common Poorwill** are sometimes found at dusk along rural/mountain roads, but not predictably. **Western Screech-Owl** occur in larger oak groves in hills and open space near town, but require playbacks and a good flashlight. **Northern Pygmy-Owl** can occasionally be located in canyons of the San Gabriel Mountains (with some effort), and the rarer species, including **Spotted Owl** and **Flammulated Owl**, are particularly hard to find (much less to see) and generally require several hours of searching at night, with tapes and lights.

Black Swift (2c) Present briefly from mid-May through July at a handful of foothill waterfalls northeast of Los Angeles. Requires a directed search/wait, best made in early morning or just before dusk.

Anna's Hummingbird/Allen's Hummingbird (1a) Both common and conspicuous within the city and in natural habitat.

Gila Woodpecker (4) Local resident south of Salton Sea.

Acorn Woodpecker (2a) Common resident in parks around Los Angeles with tall oaks and sycamores, away from the coast.

Nuttall's Woodpecker (1a) The common urban woodpecker in L.A., found in larger parks and open space with trees.

White-headed Woodpecker (2a) Resident above 5500' in the San Gabriel Mountains, usually about a 2-hour drive from LAX (less from Pasadena).

Prairie Falcon (3b) Breeds in very small numbers in cliffs at the desert's edge; more widespread in winter in agricultural areas of the Antelope Valley, but easy to miss.

Pacific-slope Flycatcher (1b) Breeds (March-August) locally in urban Los Angeles, commonly in surrounding open space.

Tropical Kingbird (2c) Regular in fall (September) and winter somewhere in the Los Angeles area; usually a stake-out at a local park.

Plumbeous Vireo (2b) A handful winter at urban parks.

Cassin's Vireo (2b) Nests locally in canyons of the San Gabriel Mountains; uncommon transient (May/September) elsewhere.

Hutton's Vireo (2a) Resident in small numbers in oak woodland.

Pinyon Jay (3c) Found in high, remote mountain areas far to northwest and southeast of Los Angeles, and unpredictable from year to year so never guaranteed.

Steller's Jay (2a) Resident above 4500' in the San Gabriel Mountains, usually about a 2-hour drive from LAX (less from Pasadena).

Western Scrub-Jay (1a) Resident throughout, including in fairly urban areas.

Island Scrub-Jay is resident on Santa Cruz Island off the coast, and requires a special, day-long trip arranged through Island Packers or another concessionaire/tour group.

Clark's Nutcracker (3a) Resident above 7000' in mountains; typically only seen flying-over unless a special effort is made.

Yellow-billed Magpie (3a) Resident as close as 2.5-3 hours northwest of L.A., in north Santa Barbara County.

Violet-green Swallow (2b) Spring and summer resident in foothills (above 3000') and mountains north of Los Angeles.

Mountain Chickadee (2a) Resident above 5500' in the San Gabriel Mountains, usually about a 2-hour drive from LAX (less from Pasadena).

Oak Titmouse (1a) Common resident in woodland at edges of Los Angeles Basin and locally within city (e.g., Griffith Park)

Bushtit (1a) Resident throughout city/surrounding hills.

Pygmy Nuthatch (2a) Resident above 5500' in the San Gabriel Mountains, usually about a 2-hour drive from LAX (less from Pasadena).

Canyon Wren (2a) Resident in mountains surrounding Los Angeles, near sheer cliffs and rock outcrops.

California Gnatcatcher (2a) Local resident east and south of Los Angeles, in a handful of reserves that support extensive coastal scrub.

Wrentit (2a) Resident in dense native chaparral along the outer edges of the Los Angeles Basin (but locally into the Hollywood Hills, etc.); sometimes fairly tame, other times frustratingly skulking.

Mountain Bluebird (3b) Winters irregularly in agricultural areas of the Antelope Valley and very locally elsewhere.

Townsend's Solitaire (3b) Summers in mountain canyons and shady coniferous forest, but generally uncommon and hard to locate unless one spends an entire day birding the mountains.

Bendire's Thrasher (4) Found in low desert mountains near the Nevada border in spring/summer.

California Thrasher (2a) Like Wrentit, found in dense, native stands of chaparral away from urban settings. Most easily found in late winter/spring when singing.

Le Conte's Thrasher (3c) Restricted to remote, arid desert scrub as close as 2 hours from Los Angeles, but hard to find outside late winter/spring when singing. Can require a full day of searching, always starting before dawn.

Crissal Thrasher (4) Resident in two separate areas of the eastern deserts, including low desert mountains near the Nevada border, and in mesquite/tamarisk scrub habitat along the lower Colorado River and Salton Sea regions.

Phainopepla (2b) Fairly common in foothills in spring and summer; winters more locally, at lower elevations away from coast.

Longspurs (3c) Both **Lapland Longspur** and **Chestnut-collared Longspur** winter irregularly in agricultural areas of the Oxnard Plain and Antelope Valley, but are not present annually, and can require a long search (of boring habitat) to see well.

MacGillivray's Warbler (2c) Breeds May – August at springs within in high mountain forests, it also occurs widely (but never in numbers) as a migrant in spring and (less commonly) fall.

Black-throated Gray Warbler (2b) Breeds May – August in foothill and montane chaparral, it also occurs widely (but never in numbers) as a migrant in spring and (less commonly) fall.

Hermit Warbler (2c) Breeds May – August in high mountain forests, it also occurs widely (but never in numbers) as a migrant in spring and (less commonly) fall.

Rufous-crowned Sparrow (2b) Hard to see but fairly common resident in grassy scrub and chaparral, most readily found in spring when singing.

California Towhee (1a) Resident in scrub and lush plantings throughout city.

Black-chinned Sparrow (2c) Fairly common in late spring/summer in foothill and montane chaparral chaparral.

Lark Sparrow (2b) Common but localized resident away from coast.

Bell's Sparrow (2a) Resident (*canescens* race) in the Antelope Valley; the rarer *belli* race is resident locally in chaparral in the more remote foothills.

Savannah Sparrow races (2a) Both the “Belding's” Savannah Sparrow (2a) and the “Large-billed” Savannah Sparrow may be found at Bolsa Chica in winter; Belding's is resident year-round here and at Playa del Rey.

Golden-crowned Sparrow (1b) Winter resident in open space areas with dense scrub.

Tricolored Blackbird (2c) Resident far northwest of Los Angeles (1.5 hrs from LAX) but a small number winter closer to the city, at Legg Lake.

Bullock's Oriole (1b) Breeds in older parks within urban Los Angeles (April – August); a handful winter.

Hooded Oriole (1b) Ubiquitous throughout city from late March through early August.

Scott's Oriole (3b) Uncommon in late spring and summer in Joshua Tree woodland in desert.

Purple Finch (2a) Resident in foothill canyons; winter abundance varies greatly from year to year, when "invasions" may occur in the lowlands.

Cassin's Finch (3a) Resident above 7000' in San Gabriel Mountains, around 2-3 hours from LAX.

Lawrence's Goldfinch (2c) Unpredictably present throughout the year from foothills to desert, well away from coast.

### **Exotics**

Spotted Dove (1c) Formerly common (through 1980s) and reliable to around 2012, now down to a handful of individuals southeast of downtown Los Angeles, and easily missed.

PARROTS (1a-2a) Many species are well-established in the Los Angeles area (check eBird if interested in a particular species), with predictable movements and usage areas. Rose-ringed Parakeet is found in the town of Playa del Rey, just north of LAX. Black-hooded/Nanday Conure is found in the central and western Santa Monica Mountains, especially near Pacific Palisades and Malibu. Yellow-chevrons Parakeet and Mitred Parakeet are most common in the central city, and several species of "Amazona" parrots (including Red-crowned) are established in the San Gabriel Valley near Pasadena.

Red-whiskered Bulbul (2a) Resident at Huntington Library near Pasadena and in surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Northern Red Bishop (2a) Resident in weedy flood-control basins and channels around Los Angeles.

Scaly-breasted Munia (f.k.a. "Nutmeg Mannikin") (2a) Resident in weedy flood-control basins and channels around Los Angeles.

Pin-tailed Widgeon (2a) Resident at Huntington Beach Central Park and locally elsewhere in Orange County.