

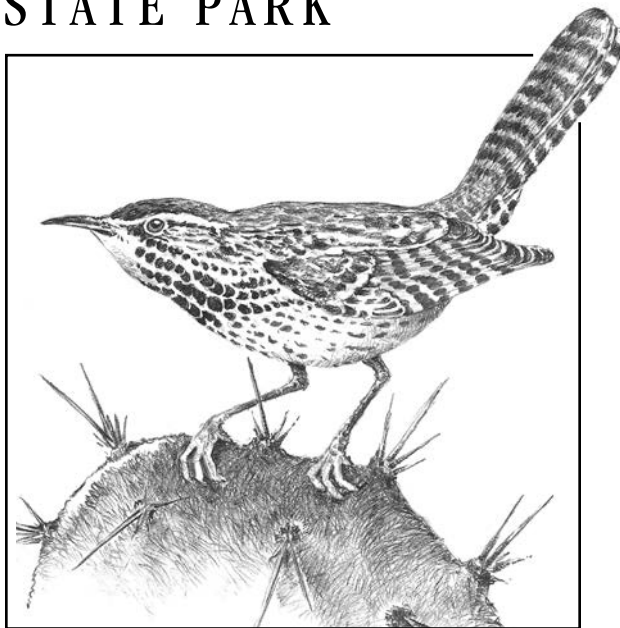
TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

BIRDS

OF

FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS

STATE PARK



A FIELD CHECKLIST

2024

INTRODUCTION

The Franklin Mountains lie entirely within the northern Chihuahuan Desert and straddle the Texas/New Mexico boundary. From downtown El Paso, they extend north some 15 miles to the state line, then continue another 8 miles in New Mexico. The eastern face of the Franklin's is the steeper uplift face of the fault block range. Because it is sheltered from the prevailing westerly winds and has deeper canyons, it supports more vegetation than does the drier, more exposed western face. Species diversity and population density of the wildlife are correspondingly greater here.

Bare rock faces, faulted and uplifted, jut to almost 3,500 feet above El Paso. The Franklin's are characterized by low rainfall, high evaporation, and extremes of daytime and night-time temperatures. When it rains, predictably in July and August, it usually comes in torrents and the runoff rushes down the arroyos to the desert basins below. Alluvial fans (bajadas) stretch away from eroded angular peaks of more-resistant rocks. A few permanent springs and seeps occur at higher elevations and support pockets of trees and shrubs in their immediate vicinity.

Dominant plants of the Chihuahuan Desert include creosote bush, lechuguilla, saltbush, cacti, and yuccas. The numerous desert washes and arroyos are lined with desert willow, Apache plume, and desert sumac. Higher up in the mountain canyons, one may encounter small stands of oaks, hackberries, Wright's Silktassel, and junipers. While these stands are few, they and the springs that are often found near them act as magnets to resident as well as migrating birds. Desert grasslands prevail at mid-elevations and are particularly well developed on the moister east side.

A great variety of birds can be found within the park. Perhaps most characteristic are the desert species such as Scaled Quail; Gambel's Quail; Ladder-backed Woodpecker; Greater Roadrunner; Red-tailed Hawk; Verdin; Rock, Canyon, and Cactus Wrens; Curve-billed Thrasher; Pyrrhuloxia; and Black-throated and Rufous-crowned Sparrows. However, due to a variety of factors, such as the proximity of the Rio Grande and its floodplain and the ever-nearing residential

areas, many otherwise unlikely species can be found here as well. Some of these species (Swainson's Hawk, Mississippi Kite, White-winged and Mourning Doves, House Finch; Great-tailed Grackle, House Sparrow, swallows, etc.) may be common within a few miles of the park boundaries but are rarely seen deep within the park itself.

Migration, of course, brings the greatest diversity to the Franklin Mountains. From mid-April to mid-May and again from late August to mid-October, the canyons, particularly those with permanent springs, may be alive with flycatchers, vireos, warblers, and tanagers. It is at this time also that one need be aware of the likelihood of rarities, drawn to the mountain canyons by their vegetation and water.

In winter, the main attractions are the huge sparrow flocks which forage in the grasslands of the lower slopes of the park. Twelve or more species are possible, including Brewer's, Clay-colored, Chipping, White-crowned, Black-chinned, and Lark Sparrows: and Dark-eyed Junco. The breeding season is equally entertaining with the flute-like song of Scott's Oriole echoing down the canyons, the constant twittering of White-throated Swifts and Violet-green Swallows overhead, and the wild loops of displaying Black-chinned and Rufous Hummingbirds. At any time of year, visitors will find birding in the Franklin Mountains to be a fulfilling experience.

This checklist, the result of several years of observation, was originally compiled by Barry R. Zimmer of El Paso. Nomenclature and organization follow the A.O.U. *Checklist of North American Birds* (7th edition, 2023), as currently supplemented.

Vehicular access in Franklin Mountains State Park is restricted to the Tom Mays Unit, McKelligon Canyon, and along Trans-Mountain Road. Otherwise, hiking is the order of the day. Be certain to carry adequate water, as none is available in this wilderness area. Be extra careful near – or better yet, stay away from– old mines and prospects.

Please do not disturb the animals, plant life, or any historic artifacts. While birding the springs or seeps, please stay on the trails to help us protect these fragile ecosystems.

We hope that you enjoy a safe, challenging experience at Franklin Mountains State Park.

Please help protect the natural avian communities in our parks by refraining from using playback tapes of bird songs. Frequent use of these tapes disrupts normal avian activity patterns, disrupts essential territorial behavior and may lead to nest failure. Thank you for your cooperation.

LEGEND

Seasons

- Sp – Spring (March – May)
- S – Summer (June – August)
- F – Fall (September – November)
- W – Winter (December – February)

Abundance

- A = abundant – should see on every trip in proper habitat and season
- C = common – should see on 3 out of 4 trips in proper habitat and season
- F = fairly common – should see on 2 out of 4 trips in proper habitat and season
- U = uncommon – should see on 1 out of 4 trips in proper habitat and season
- R = rare – should see on 1 out of 10 trips or less in proper habitat and season
- Ca = casual
- X = accidental

Cover: Illustration of Cactus Wren by Clemente Guzman.

CHECKLIST

	Sp	S	F	W
___ Snow Goose	Ca		Ca	
___ Canada Goose.....	Ca		Ca	Ca
___ Scaled Quail	A	A	A	A
___ Gambel's Quail.....	A	A	A	A
___ Rock Pigeon	Ca	Ca	Ca	Ca
___ Band-tailed Pigeon	X			
___ White-winged Dove	A	A	A	A
___ Mourning Dove	A	A	A	A
___ Greater Roadrunner.....	F	F	U	U
___ Lesser Nighthawk	U	U	R	
___ Common Nighthawk.....	R	Ca	R	
___ Common Poorwill	F	F	U	X
___ Mexican Whip-poor-will	X			
___ Black Swift.....			X	
___ White-throated Swift.....	C	C	C	U
___ Black-chinned Hummingbird	C	C	C	
___ Anna's Hummingbird	X	R		
___ Costa's Hummingbird.....	X			
___ Calliope Hummingbird	X	R	U	
___ Rufous Hummingbird.....		F	C	
___ Broad-tailed Hummingbird.....	U	R	U	
___ Sandhill Crane			U	R
___ Red Phalarope.....			X	
___ Snowy Egret.....			X	
___ White-faced Ibis	X		X	

	Sp	S	F	W
___ Turkey Vulture	F	U	F	R
___ Golden Eagle	U	U	U	U
___ Northern Harrier	U		U	U
___ Sharp-shinned Hawk	U	U	U	U
___ Cooper's Hawk	U	U	U	U
___ Mississippi Kite	R	R	R	
___ Harris's Hawk	X	X	X	
___ Short-tailed Hawk	X		X	
___ Swainson's Hawk	R	R	R	R
___ Red-tailed Hawk	C	C	C	C
___ Ferruginous Hawk		Ca	Ca	X
___ Barn Owl	R	R	R	R
___ Flammulated Owl			X	
___ Western Screech-Owl	R	R	R	R
___ Great Horned Owl	U	U	U	U
___ Burrowing Owl	Ca	X	Ca	Ca
___ Long-eared Owl				X
___ Short-eared Owl				X
___ Acorn Woodpecker	R	R	R	R
___ Williamson's Sapsucker			X	
___ Red-naped Sapsucker	R		U	Ca
___ Ladder-backed Woodpecker	C	C	C	C
___ Northern Flicker	U	Ca	F	F
___ American Kestrel	U	R	U	U
___ Merlin	Ca		Ca	Ca

	Sp	S	F	W
___ Peregrine Falcon	Ca		Ca	
___ Prairie Falcon.....	Ca	Ca	Ca	Ca
___ Ash-throated Flycatcher.....	F	F	R	
___ Cassin's Kingbird.....	U	R	R	
___ Western Kingbird.....	U	U	U	
___ Olive-sided Flycatcher	U		U	
___ Greater Pewee.....		X		
___ Western Wood-Pewee	C	U	C	
___ Willow Flycatcher	R		R	
___ Least Flycatcher.....			R	
___ Hammond's Flycatcher	R		R	
___ Gray Flycatcher	R		U	
___ Dusky Flycatcher	R		R	
___ Western Flycatcher	U		U	
___ Say's Phoebe.....	C	C	C	U
___ Hutton's Vireo.....			X	
___ Cassin's Vireo.....	X		X	
___ Blue-headed Vireo	X		X	
___ Plumbeous Vireo	X		X	
___ Warbling Vireo	U	U	U	
___ Loggerhead Shrike	U	R	U	U
___ Pinyon Jay	X		X	
___ Steller's Jay			Ca	Ca
___ Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay.....	R		U	U
___ Chihuahuan Raven.....	U	U	R	R

	Sp	S	F	W
___ Common Raven.....			X	
___ Verdin	F	F	F	F
___ Mountain Chickadee.....			X	X
___ Horned Lark	R		R	U
___ Violet-green Swallow.....	U	U	U	X
___ Barn Swallow	U	R	U	
___ Cliff Swallow.....	R		R	
___ Ruby-crowned Kinglet	C		C	F
___ Cedar Waxwing.....	R		R	Ca
___ Phainopepla	R	R	Ca	Ca
___ Red-breasted Nuthatch			X	X
___ White-breasted Nuthatch.....			Ca	
___ Brown Creeper.....	X		X	
___ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.....		X		
___ Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	R		R	R
___ Rock Wren	A	A	A	A
___ Canyon Wren.....	A	A	A	C
___ Cactus Wren	A	A	A	C
___ Bewick's Wren	U	R	U	U
___ House Wren	F	X	F	U
___ Gray Catbird	R	R		
___ Curve-billed Thrasher.....	C	C	C	C
___ Brown Thrasher				X
___ Crissal Thrasher	U	U	R	R
___ Sage Thrasher	U	R	U	R

	Sp	S	F	W
___ Northern Mockingbird	C	C	U	R
___ European Starling.....	X	X	X	X
___ American Dipper				X
___ Western Bluebird.....	R		U	U
___ Mountain Bluebird.....	R		Ca	Ca
___ Townsend's Solitaire.....	R	R	R	Ca
___ Swainson's Thrush.....			X	
___ Hermit Thrush.....	U		U	U
___ American Robin	R		R	R
___ House Sparrow	C	C	C	C
___ House Finch.....	A	A	A	A
___ Cassin's Finch.....	Ca		Ca	
___ Pine Siskin.....	U		U	U
___ Lesser Goldfinch	U	R	U	F
___ Lawrence's Goldfinch.....		Ca		
___ Cassin's Sparrow	R	R	U	U
___ Grasshopper Sparrow.....	R	R	X	X
___ Black-throated Sparrow.....	A	A	A	A
___ Lark Sparrow.....	U		F	
___ Lark Bunting	F	U	F	U
___ Chipping Sparrow	C	R	C	F
___ Clay-colored Sparrow.....	R		F	X
___ Black-chinned Sparrow	U	U	U	F
___ Field Sparrow			X	
___ Brewer's Sparrow	C		C	F

	Sp	S	F	W
___ Dark-eyed Junco.....	C		C	C
___ White-crowned Sparrow.....	C		A	A
___ Golden-crowned Sparrow	X		X	X
___ White-throated Sparrow				X
___ Sagebrush Sparrow				R
___ Vesper Sparrow.....	U		U	U
___ Savannah Sparrow.....	U		U	U
___ Song Sparrow	R		R	R
___ Lincoln's Sparrow	U		U	U
___ Swamp Sparrow			X	X
___ Canyon Towhee.....	C	C	C	C
___ Rufous-crowned Sparrow	C	C	C	C
___ Green-tailed Towhee.....	C	U	C	U
___ Spotted Towhee	F	U	F	F
___ Chihuahuan Meadowlark.....	R		R	
___ Eastern Meadowlark	X		X	
___ Western Meadowlark.....	R		R	
___ Bullock's Oriole.....	U		R	
___ Scott's Oriole	F	U	U	
___ Brown-headed Cowbird.....	U	U	R	
___ Brewer's Blackbird	Ca		Ca	Ca
___ Great-tailed Grackle.....	Ca	Ca	Ca	
___ Ovenbird	X			
___ Northern Waterthrush	R		R	
___ Black-and-white Warbler.....	Ca		Ca	

	Sp	S	F	W
___ Prothonotary Warbler.....			X	
___ Tennessee Warbler.....	X			
___ Orange-crowned Warbler.....	R		R	
___ Nashville Warbler.....	R		R	
___ Virginia's Warbler.....	U	X	F	
___ MacGillivray's Warbler.....	U		U	
___ American Redstart.....	Ca		R	
___ Yellow Warbler.....	R		U	
___ Chestnut-sided Warbler.....	X		X	
___ Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	C		C	U
___ Black-throated Gray Warbler.....	R		R	
___ Townsend's Warbler.....	U		F	
___ Hermit Warbler.....	X		Ca	
___ Wilson's Warbler.....	A		A	
___ Painted Redstart.....	X		X	
___ Hepatic Tanager.....	U		U	
___ Western Tanager.....	U	U	F	
___ Pyrrhuloxia.....	U	U	F	F
___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak.....	X			
___ Black-headed Grosbeak.....	U		U	
___ Blue Grosbeak.....	U	U	U	
___ Lazuli Bunting.....	U		U	
___ Indigo Bunting.....	R	R	R	
___ Painted Bunting.....		X	X	
___ Dickcissel.....			Ca	

CITATION

Compiled by Texas State Park Staff and Volunteers, March 2024. Birds of Franklin Mountains State Park: A Field Checklist. Texas State Parks, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Austin, Texas.

In 1983, the Texas Legislature created the Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund. This fund may be used for nongame wildlife and endangered species research and conservation, habitat acquisition and development and dissemination of information pertaining to nongame management. Money for this fund is obtained through private donations and sale of nongame wildlife art prints and stamps. This fund now gives Texans a unique opportunity to help support this state's valuable and sensitive nongame resources. Your individual contributions and purchases of nongame art prints and stamps will help determine the level of nongame conservation activities in Texas. For more information call toll-free (1-800-792-1112) or contact: **Nongame and Endangered Species Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744.**

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