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<http://diablosteve.yolasite.com/climate-watch.php>

Climate Watch



This page is intended as a help in identifying the six or seven species we're counting for GGAS's part of the Audubon Climate Watch point count survey.

Resources (all free; no registration required):

[General visual and auditory birding resources](#)
and credits for the materials I've used.

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org>
Cornell's excellent site for visual and vocal i.d.

<https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/peterson-field-guide-to-bird-sounds/>
Cornell's excellent companion website to the Peterson bird sounds field guides. Listen to many recordings of North American bird species.

<https://birdnet.cornell.edu/>
Can't i.d. that bird song? Upload your sound file to this app for a (mostly) accurate i.d.

[Identification Slides](#)

Zoom recording 1
Species on this recording

Spotted Towhee
Western Bluebird
Lesser Goldfinch
American Goldfinch



Spotted Towhee

Pipilo maculatus

Family: Passerellidae (sparrows)

Pieplow Guide Page No.: 425

Bay Area Status: Year-round resident

Audubon climate status: Moderately vulnerable



John Reynolds, Macaulay Lib.

Songs

Spotted Towhees have a fairly simple song, The song starts with an explosive note and then a fast trill that can sound like a taut rubber band being plucked, or a piece of paper stuck into a fan. Eastern subspecies sing several introductory notes, which are rarely heard in the Bay Area.

Calls

Spotted Towhees make a catlike mew call, a little more than a half-second long. It seems to be used for scolding as well as by perched or foraging birds. Pairs sometimes exchange a soft, lispng call to stay in contact. Spotted Towhees also give a high, thin flight call.

Vocalization text mainly from Cornell <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>

Spotted Towhee vs. Dark-eyed Junco ("Oregon" Subspecies)



John Reynolds, Macaulay Lib.



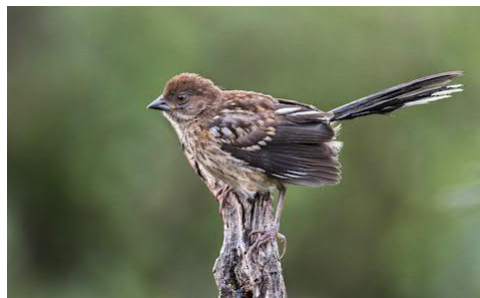
Sam Hough, Macaulay Lib.



Brad Imhoff, Macaulay Lib.



hankchristensen.com



Jim Merritt, Macaulay Lib.



Mason Maron, Macaulay Lib.

Western Bluebird

Sialia mexicana

Family: Turdidae (thrushes)

Pieplow Guide Page No.: 368

Bay Area Status: Year-round resident

Audubon climate status: Moderately to Highly Vulnerable

Male/Female



Brooke Miller, Macaulay Lib.



Erica Rutherford, Macaulay Lib.

Songs

Western Bluebird songs tend to be a string of various call notes, particularly the kew note (sounds like a muffled sneeze) along with other stuttering or whistled notes. The result is a soft, hesitant song that can last 1-2 seconds.

Calls

The most common call is a soft, quavering kew that may be given from a perch or in flight and is often given several times in succession. They also make a harsher, double-noted che-check when changing position and a chattering call when disturbed.

Other Sounds

Western Bluebirds clap their bill mandibles together in aggressive situations, making a clicking sound.

Vocalization text mainly from Cornell <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>

Lesser Goldfinch

Spinus psaltria

Family: Fringillidae (finches)

Pieplow Guide Page No.: 409

Bay Area Status: Year round resident

Male/Female or Imm.



Carlos Escheverria, Macaulay Lib.



Chris S. Wood, Macaulay Lib.

Audubon climate status: Stable

Songs

The male's breeding song is a jumble of clear, sharp notes mixed in with wheezes, trills, and stutters, lasting up to 10 seconds. Males incorporate snippets of the songs of many other species, including Ash-throated Flycatchers, Verdins, Curve-billed Thrashers, American Kestrels, scrub-jays, and many more. [50% of the song may be notes imitating other species.]

Calls

When mingling in a flock, Lesser Goldfinches make a very common contact call that's wheezy and descending, given one or two notes at a time. They also give a couple of chit notes in flight. Males give a descending tee-yer call to females during courtship. Calls sound similar to several other species, especially Black Phoebe.

American Goldfinch

Spinus tristis

Family: Fringillidae (Finches)

Pieplow Guide Page No.: 407

Bay Area Status: Year-round resident

Audubon climate status: Moderately Vulnerable

Male/Female



Adam Jackson, Macaulay Lib.



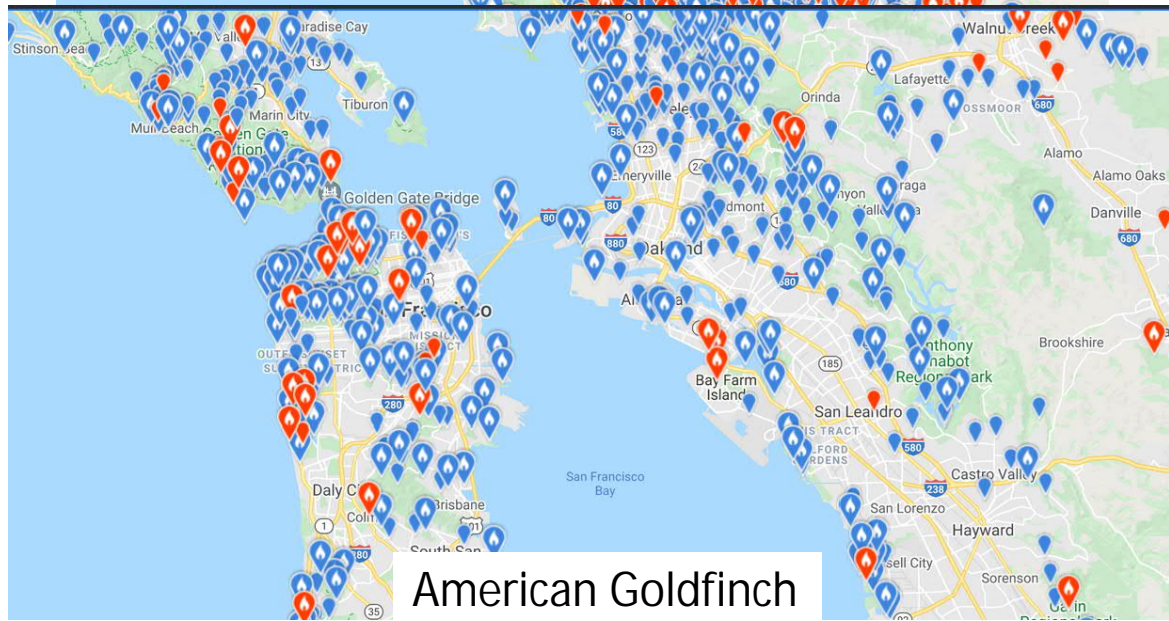
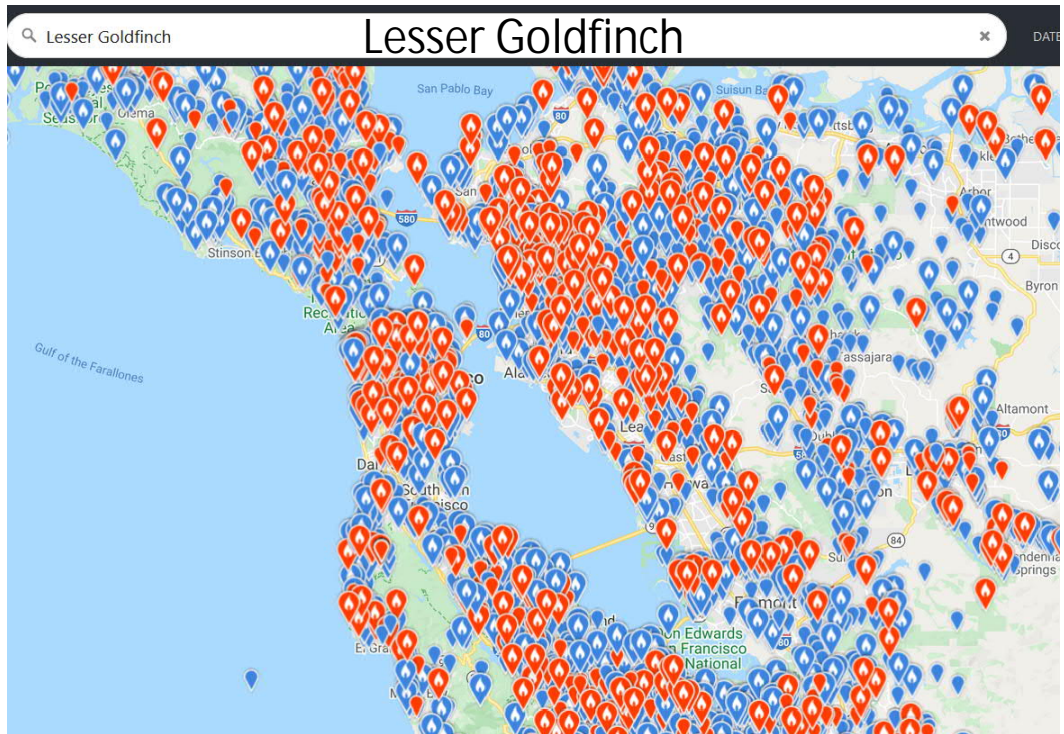
Matt Davis, Macaulay Lib.

Songs

Males sing a long and variable series of twitters and warbles that can be several seconds long. The notes and phrases are variable and repeated in a seemingly random order. Birds continue to learn song patterns throughout life.

Calls

The American Goldfinch's most common call is its contact call, often given in flight. It sounds like the bird is quietly saying po-ta-to-chip with a very even cadence. Birds sometimes give harsh threat calls when in feeding flocks or at the nest. Males make a tee-ye courtship call upon landing near a female in spring or early summer, often followed by a burst of song. Females brooding nestlings make a rapid sequence of high notes when they hear their mate approaching with food. Birds at their nest make a loud, two-parted bay-bee call if they feel threatened.

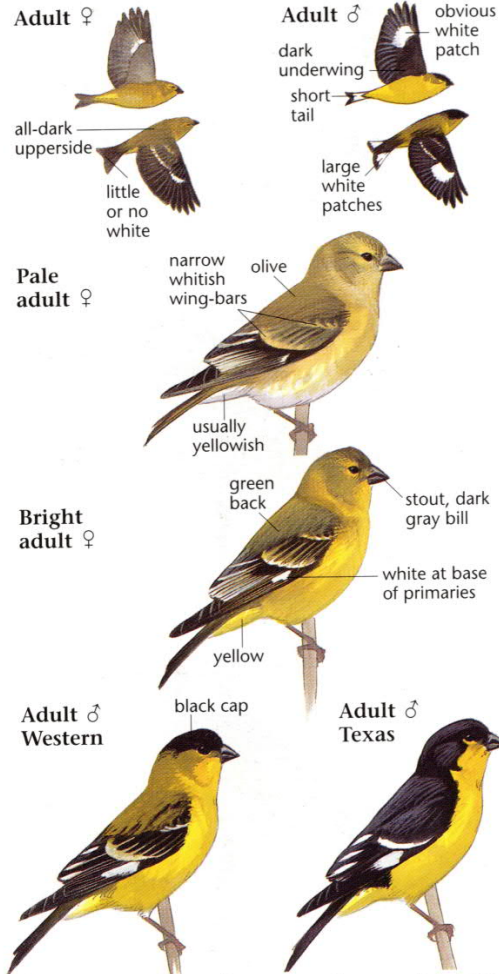


Lesser Goldfinch

Carduelis psaltria

L 4.5" WS 8" WT 0.33 oz (9.5 g)

Our smallest goldfinch; tiny, stocky, and short-tailed, with short, rounded wings and large bill.



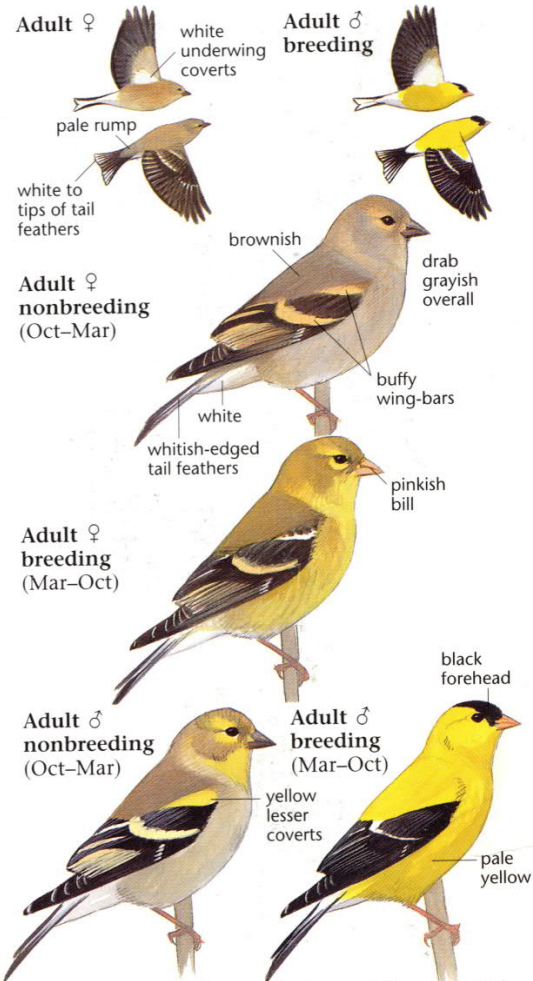
Voice: Song slower, hoarser, and more disjointed than American; little repetition of notes; includes many imitations of call notes of other species. Call a distinctive, very high, clear, wiry *tleeee*, *teeeeyEE*, and *tsee-eeew* and variations. Flight call a hoarse, grating *chig chig chig*.

American Goldfinch

Carduelis tristis

L 5" WS 9" WT 0.46 oz (13 g)

Our largest goldfinch (but still a very small bird); stocky. Note whitish undertail coverts and well-defined wing-bars.



Voice: Song high, musical, rapidly repeated phrases *toWEE toWEE toWEEto tweer tweer ti ti ti ti*; may suggest buntings but less stereotyped; fading at end. Call a thin, wiry *toweeewee* or *tweeee*; also a soft *tihoo* and variations. Flight call a soft, whistled, descending series *ti di di di*.

Zoom recording 2 Nuthatches

In Size Order, Largest to Smallest →

White-breasted Nuthatch



Red-breasted Nuthatch



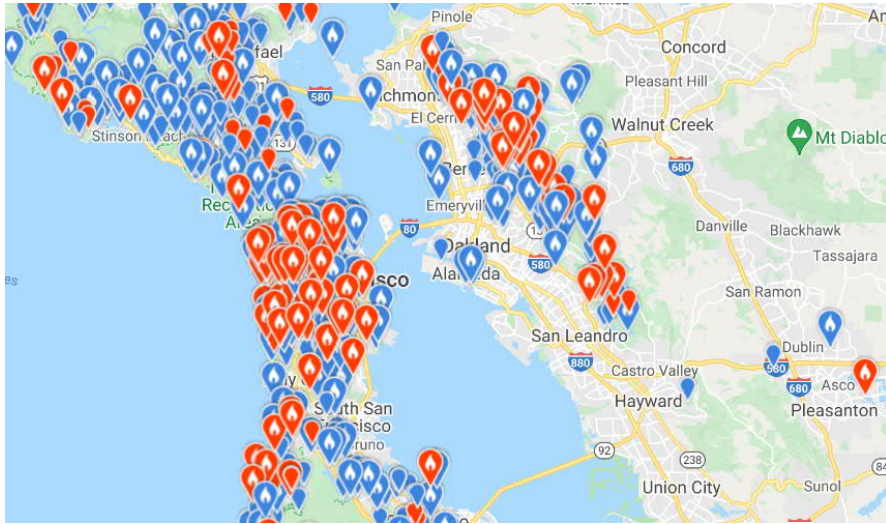
Pygmy Nuthatch



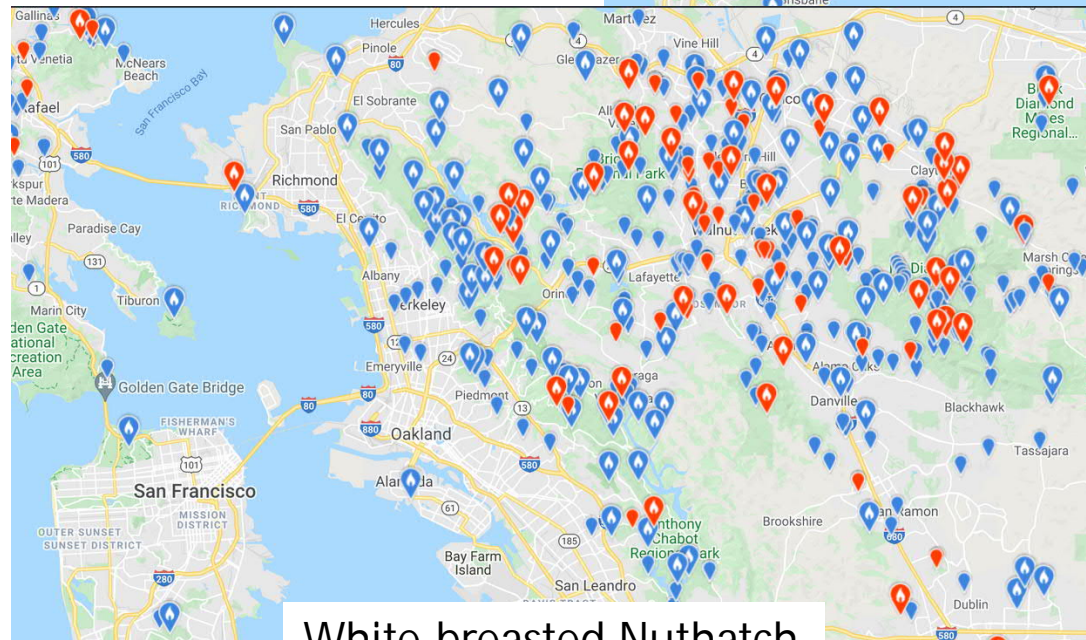
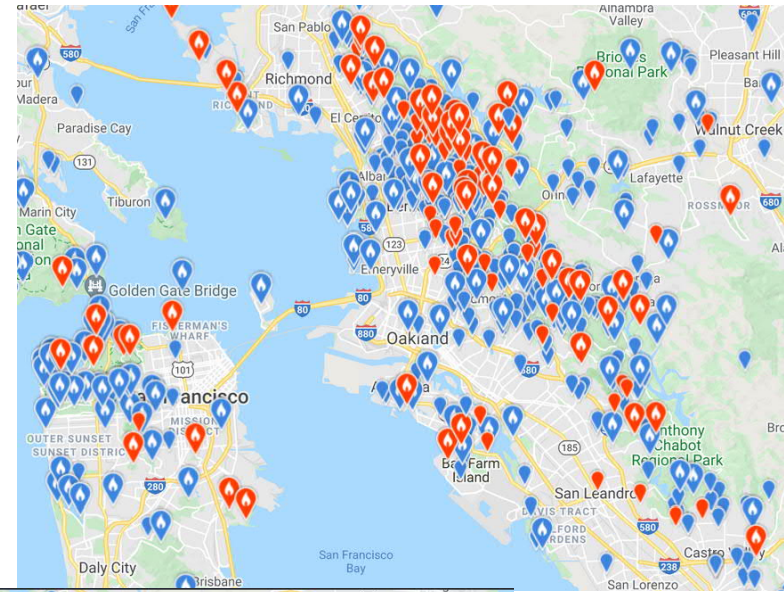
Brown Creeper
Not a target species
Included for comparison



Pygmy Nuthatch



Red-breasted Nuthatch



White-breasted Nuthatch

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Sitta canadensis

Family: Sittidae (nuthatches)

Pieplow Guide Page No.: 341

Bay Area Status: Resident but scarce in summer except in Oakland hills

Audubon climate status: Moderately Vulnerable

Adult Male



Scott Martin, Macaulay Lib.

Songs

Red-breasted Nuthatches sing a fast series of nasal, hornlike notes that sound like yank-yank. Songs can have 6 or more of these notes each, and the songs themselves can be repeated up to 16 times per minute. It's unmated males that sing this most frequently. Males and females sometimes sing a similar but slower and harsher version of this song when they are defending their territory.

Calls

The yank note can also be given as a call by both sexes (though more often by the male) as a way of communicating between the pair. This note can be sped up until it sounds like a vibrating trill, typically given from near the nest just at the end of nest excavation or beginning of egg-laying. During confrontations, chases or copulation, nuthatches may make a phew call, and agitated birds sometimes make a wrenlike scolding call.

Vocalization text mainly from Cornell <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>

White-breasted Nuthatch

Sitta carolinensis

Family: Sittidae (nuthatches)

Pieplow Guide Page No.: 342

Bay Area Status: Resident

Audubon climate status: Moderately Vulnerable

Adult Male



Ryan Schain, Macaulay Lib.

Calls

The White-breasted Nuthatch's most common call is a loud, nasal yank often repeated a few times in a row. Both sexes make this call, and it often has a more trembling, almost bleating quality, than either the bird's song or the Red-breasted Nuthatch's call. When looking for food, males and females exchange a soft yink.

Songs

Male White-breasted Nuthatches sing in late winter and spring, a rapid, nasal, fairly low-pitched wha-wha-wha that lasts 2-3 seconds. It's made up of a half-dozen to a dozen nearly identical notes. Males sing these songs at two rates, with the faster version packing in twice as many notes in the same amount of time. The fast version is thought to be the main one used for mate attraction.

Vocalization text mainly from Cornell <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>

Pygmy Nuthatch

Sitta pygmaea

Family: Sittidae (nuthatches)

Pieplow Guide Page No.: 345

Bay Area Status: Resident

Audubon climate status: **Highly Vulnerable**

Adult



Gordon Karre, Macaulay Lib.

Calls

The most frequent call is a shrill, staccato piping, sounding a bit like Morse code or a rubber ducky being repeatedly squeezed. Pygmy Nuthatches also have other calls, including titters and high-pitched trills, which combine in a large flock to create a steady, conversation-like chattering.

Songs

As in other nuthatch species, there is no concrete division between songs and calls. The Pygmy Nuthatch's song is a continuous repetition of its "piping" call, lasting for more than 2 minutes.

Vocalization text mainly from Cornell <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>