

# **Wildlife** of

## **Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge**

**California**



## Welcome to Salton Sea Refuge

Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge in south central California was established in 1930 for the preservation of wintering habitat for waterfowl and other migratory bird species. The Refuge is administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior and includes about 33,000 acres.

## A Salty Habitat Supporting Over 400 Species of Wildlife

The Salton Sea is the largest saline lake in California. It covers over 380 square miles. It varies from 9-15 miles wide and is 35 miles long and includes 115 miles of shoreline. It is 40 feet deep and the current level is 226 feet below sea level. The salinity of the Sea—39 parts per thousand—is 10 percent saltier than the Pacific Ocean. The Sea is surrounded by a series of mountains on the north, west and east and intensively farmed agricultural lands in the south.

Habitat types include desert scrub, freshwater marshes, mudflats, alkaline shoreline and deepwater areas, highly irrigated farmlands, and mesquite lined tree coverstrips. Each of these habitat types supports its own particular wildlife species. Over 400 wildlife species use the Refuge areas.

## Enjoying the Refuge's Wildlife

The study of wild animals in their natural habitats has become increasingly popular with many people. Viewing of wildlife can be greatly enhanced by a pair of binoculars or spotting scope and a good wildlife/birding guide.

Wildlife species in this brochure have been grouped into four categories: Birds, Mammals, Reptiles and Amphibians, and Fish.

## Birds

Bird populations vary greatly in numbers and species according to seasons. Heavy migrations of waterfowl, marsh and shorebirds occur during spring and fall with many species remaining to nest on the Salton Sea shoreline. Throughout the mild winter and spring a wide variety of smaller birds and birds of prey are present. They are attracted to the freshwater marshes and riparian habitat along the New and Alamo rivers. The best opportunity to observe the greatest diversity of bird life on Salton Sea is from November to May.

The following list contains 356 species that have been recorded on the Salton Sea and the adjacent Imperial Valley. It is not considered final as observations by many people continue to add to the list. This list uses common names in accordance with the 1982 A.O.U. check list and its supplements.

When looking at a bird, pay close attention to characteristics such as color, size, shape, wing and head markings. Always observe first and then refer to your identification book because the bird may not remain where it can be readily observed for a long period of time. This is especially true of perching birds.

### LEGEND

HAB	Habitat preferred
SPR	(Spring) —March-May
SUM	(Summer) —June-August
FAL	(Fall) —September-October
WIN	(Winter) —November-March
NOT	Notes. Information over and above the relative abundance to more clarify the status of some species.

### HABITAT CODES

o	open water
b	beach and mudflat
m	marshes
f	farmlands
s	shrubland
r	riparian vegetation
a	aerial
h	treelines associated with houses and buildings

### ABUNDANCE CODES

C	Common to Abundant
U	Uncommon to Fairly Common
R	Rare to Very Uncommon
O	Occasional
A	Accidental

**ABBREVIATIONS LISTED UNDER NOTES**

- B Species breeds in the area  
 B+ Sporadic breeder in the area  
 E Erratic species present in some years, absent in others  
 X Formerly occurred in the area, now only accidental  
 XB Extirpated breeder. No recent breeding records  
 P Post-breeding visitor from the south, most numerous July-September  
 1-9 Actual number recorded occurrences for accidental species

Threatened/Endangered Species

SPECIES	HAB	SPR	SUM	FAL	WIN	NOT
<b>LOONS</b>						
Arctic Loon .....	o		A		A	
Common Loon .....	o		A		A	
<b>GREBES</b>						
Pied-billed Grebe .....	m		U		U	
Horned Grebe .....	o		A		O	C
Eared Grebe .....	o		U		C	
Western Grebe .....	o		U		U	
<b>ALBATROSSES</b>						
Laysan Albatrosses .....			A			
<b>SHEARWATERS</b>						
Buller's Shearwater .....			A			
Sooty Shearwater .....			A			
<b>STORM-PETRELS</b>						
Leach's Storm-Petrel .....						
Least Storm-Petrel .....						
<b>BOOBIES</b>						
Blue-footed Booby .....	o					
Brown Booby .....	o					
<b>PELICAN</b>						
American White Pelican .....	oa		U		U	
<span style="border: 1px solid black;">Brown Pelican</span> .....	o		R		O	
<b>CORMORANTS</b>						
Double-crested Cormorant ...	o		C		C	
Olivaceous Cormorant .....			A		A	
<b>FRIGATEBIRDS</b>						
Magnificent Frigatebird .....	a		O		A	
<b>HERONS</b>						
American Bittern .....	m		O		U	
Least Bittern .....	m		U		O	
Great Blue Heron .....	bm		C		C	
Great Egret .....	bm		C		C	
Snowy Egret .....	bm		C		C	
Little Blue Heron .....	m		O		A	
Tricolored Heron .....	bm		O		A	
Reddish Egret .....			A			
Cattle Egret .....	fm		C		C	
Green-backed Heron .....	m		U		U	
Black-crowned Night Heron ..	m		C		C	

**SPECIES**
**HAB SPR SUM FAL WIN NOT**
**IBISES & SPOONBILLS**

White Ibis .....			A		
White-faced Ibis .....	mf		U		C
Roseate Spoonbill .....	bm		O		A

**STORKS**

Wood Stork .....	bm		C		A
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**WATERFOWL**

Fulvous Whistling-Duck .....	m		R		A
Black-Bellied Whistling-Duck ..			A		
Tundra Swan .....	om				O
Greater White-fronted Goose ..	fm		A		R
Snow Goose .....	fm		O		C
Ross' Goose .....	fm				C
Brant .....	om		O		A
Canada Goose .....	fm		O		A
Wood Duck .....	om		A		C
Green-winged Teal .....	om		R		C
Baikal Teal .....					A
American Black Duck .....					A
Mallard .....	om		O		U
Northern Pintail .....	om		R		C
Blue-winged Teal .....	om		O		C
Cinnamon Teal .....	om		U		R
Northern Shoveler .....	om		R		C
Gadwall .....	om		R		U
Eurasian Wigeon .....	om				O
American Wigeon .....	om		O		C
Canvasback .....	o		O		U
Redhead .....	o		U		U
Ring-necked Duck .....	o		A		R
Greater Scaup .....	o		A		R
Lesser Scaup .....	o		O		C
Oldsquaw .....	o		A		O
Black Scoter .....			A		A
Surf Scoter .....	o		O		O
White-winged Scoter .....	o		O		O
Common Goldeneye .....	o		O		U
Barrow's Goldeneye .....					A
Bufflehead .....	o		O		U
Hooded Merganser .....	o				O
Common Merganser .....	o		A		R
Red-breasted Merganser .....	o		R		C
Ruddy Duck .....	om		C		C

**VULTURES, HAWKS & FALCONS**

Turkey Vulture .....	af		R		R
Osprey .....	ao		R		R
Black-shouldered Kite .....					A
<span style="border: 1px solid black;">Bald Eagle</span> .....	ao				O
Northern Harrier .....	afm		O		C
Sharp-shinned Hawk .....	ars				U
Cooper's Hawk .....	ars				U
Harris' Hawk .....					
Red-shouldered Hawk .....					A
Broad-winged Hawk .....					A
Swainson's Hawk .....	af				
Zone-tailed Hawk .....					
Red-tailed Hawk .....	af		R		U
Ferruginous Hawk .....	af				R
Rough-legged Hawk .....	af				O

SPECIES HAB SPR SUM FAL WIN NOT

SPECIES	HAB	SPR	SUM	FAL	WIN	NOT
Golden Eagle					A	
American Kestrel	afh		R		C	
Merlin	af				R	
Peregrine Falcon	am		O		O	
Prairie Falcon	af				R	
<b>PHEASANTS &amp; QUAIL</b>						
Ring-necked Pheasant	f		R		R	
Gambel's Quail	s		U		U	
<b>RAILS &amp; GALLINULES</b>						
Black Rail	m		O		O	
Yuma Clapper Rail	m		R		R	
Virginia Rail	m		R		U	
Sora	m				U	
Common Moorhen	m		U		U	
American Coot	om		C		C	
<b>CRANES</b>						
Sandhill Crane	f				U	
<b>PLOVERS</b>						
Black-bellied Plover	bf		U		C	
Lesser Golden Plover	bf				A	
Snowy Plover	b		U		R	
Wilson's Plover			A			
Semipalmated Plover	b		O		R	
Killdeer	fb		C		C	
Mountain Plover	f				U	
<b>OYSTERCATCHERS</b>						
American Oystercatcher						
<b>STILTS &amp; AVOCETS</b>						
Black-necked Stilt	mf		C		C	
American Avocet	m		C		C	
<b>SANDPIPERS</b>						
Greater Yellowlegs	mf		O		C	
Lesser Yellowlegs	mf				R	
Spotted Redshank					A	
Solitary Sandpiper	mf				C	
Willet	mf		U		C	
Wandering Tattler	m				U	
Spotted Sandpiper	m				C	
Whimbrel	mf		O		C	
Long-billed Curlew	mf		U		C	
Hudsonian Godwit					U	
Marbled Godwit	b		U		A	
Ruddy Turnstone	b				A	
Black Turnstone	b				A	
Surfbird	b				A	
Red Knot	b		A		O	
Sanderling	b				O	
Semipalmated Sandpiper	b				C	
Western Sandpiper	b		O		C	
Rufous-necked Stint					C	
Least Sandpiper	b		O		C	
White-rumped Sandpiper					C	
Baird's Sandpiper	b				A	
Pectoral Sandpiper	b				U	
Dunlin	b		O		U	
Curlew Sandpiper					R	
Stilt Sandpiper	b				A	
Ruff					A	

SPECIES HAB SPR SUM FAL WIN NOT

SPECIES	HAB	SPR	SUM	FAL	WIN	NOT
<b>SANDPIPERS</b>						
Short-billed Dowitcher	b		O			
Long-billed Dowitcher	b		O		C	
Common Snipe	m				R	
Wilson's Phalarope	bo				A	
Red-necked Phalarope	bo		O		A	
Red Phalarope	o		A			
<b>JAEGERS, GULLS, TERNS &amp; SKIMMERS</b>						
Pomarine Jaeger						
Parasitic Jaeger	o					
Long-tailed Jaeger						
Laughing Gull	ob		C		O	
Franklin's Gull	ob		O			
Little Gull						
Bonaparte's Gull	ob		R		O	
Heermann's Gull	ob		O		A	
Mew Gull	ob				O	
Ring-billed Gull	obf		U		C	
California Gull	obf		C		U	
Herring Gull	obf		O		C	
Thayer's Gull	ob		A		R	
Yellow-footed Gull	ob		C		R	
Western Gull	ob				O	
Glaucous-winged Gull	ob		O		R	
Glaucous Gull	ob		A		O	
Black-legged Kittiwake			A			
Sabine's Gull	o					
Gull-billed Tern	bf		U		A	
Caspian Tern	ob		C		U	
Common Tern	ob		R			
Arctic Tern						
Forster's Tern	ob		C		U	
Least Tern	ob		O			
Black Tern	bf		C		A	
Black Skimmer	b		U		A	
<b>AUKS, MURRES &amp; PUFFINS</b>						
Ancient Murrelet			A			
<b>PIGEONS</b>						
Rock Dove	h		C		C	
Band-Tailed Pigeon						
Spotted Dove						
White-winged Dove	sh		U		A	
Mourning Dove	fsh		C		C	
Inca Dove	h		R		R	
Common Ground Dove	sh		U		U	
<b>CUCKOOS</b>						
Yellow-billed Cuckoo			A			
Greater Roadrunner	sf		C		C	
<b>TYPICAL OWLS</b>						
Barn Owl	sh		R		R	
Flammulated Owl						
Western Screech Owl	sh				O	
Great Horned Owl	sh				O	
Burrowing Owl	f		C		C	
Long-eared Owl	r				O	
Short-eared Owl	f				R	
Northern Saw-whet Owl					A	

## SPECIES

## HAB SPR SUM FAL WIN NOT

## GOATSUCKERS

Lesser Nighthawk .....	fs		U		A	
Common Poor-will .....	s					
Whip-poor-will .....						

## SWIFTS

Black Swift .....						
Vaux's Swift .....	a					
White-throated Swift .....	a			R		

## HUMMINGBIRDS

Black-chinned Hummingbird ..	h		R			
Anna's Hummingbird .....	h		R		U	
Costa's Hummingbird .....	hs		R		U	
Calliope Hummingbird .....	hs					
Rufous Hummingbird .....	hs					
Allen's Hummingbird .....						

## KINGFISHERS

Belted Kingfisher .....	rm				U	
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## WOODPECKERS

Lewis' Woodpecker .....	h				O	
Red-headed Woodpecker .....			A			
Acorn Woodpecker .....						
Gila Woodpecker .....	h		R		R	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker .....	h				R	
Red-breasted Sapsucker .....	h				O	
Ladder-backed Woodpecker ..	sh		U		U	
Nuttall's Woodpecker .....						
Northern Flicker .....	ha				C	

## TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

Olive-sided Flycatcher .....	hs					
Greater Pewee .....						
Western Wood-Pewee .....	hs					
Willow Flycatcher .....	hs					
Hammond's Flycatcher .....	hs					
Dusky Flycatcher .....	hs					
Gray Flycatcher .....	hs				A	
Western Flycatcher .....	hs					
Black Phoebe .....	hm		U		C	
Eastern Phoebe .....					A	
Say's Phoebe .....	f		R		C	
Vermillion Flycatcher .....	h		O		R	
Ash-throated Flycatcher .....	sh		R			
Tropical Kingbird .....						
Cassin's Kingbird .....	h				A	
Western Kingbird .....	fh		C			
Eastern Kingbird .....						
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher .....						

## LARKS

Horned Lark .....	f		U		C	
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## SWALLOWS

Purple Martin .....	a					
Tree Swallow .....	a		O		C	
Violet-green Swallow .....	a				A	
Northern Rough-winged Swallow .....	a				U	
Bank Swallow .....	a				C	
Cliff Swallow .....	a				O	
Barn Swallow .....	a				R	

## SPECIES

## HAB SPR SUM FAL WIN NOT

## JAYS &amp; CROWS

Scrub Jay .....	hs					O
American Crow .....	f					R
Common Raven .....	af				R	R

## TITMICE

Mountain Chickadee .....						
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## VERDINS

Verdin .....	s				C	C
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## NUTHATCHES

Red-breasted Nuthatch .....	h					
White-breasted Nuthatch .....						

## CREEPERS

Brown Creeper .....	h					O
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## WRENS

Cactus Wren .....	s				C	C
Rock Wren .....	s					R
Bewick's Wren .....	s					C
House Wren .....	sr					R
Winter Wren .....						U
Marsh Wren .....	m				C	C

## OLD WORLD WARBLERS &amp;

## THRUSHES

Golden-crowned Kinglet .....	rh					O
Ruby-crowned Kinglet .....	rsh					C
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher .....	rs					U
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher .....	s				U	U
Western Bluebird .....	sh					O
Mountain Bluebird .....	f					U
Townsend's Solitaire .....	s					O
Swainson's Thrush .....	rsh					U
Hermit Thrush .....	rsh					U
American Robin .....	h					A
Varied Thrush .....						

## THRASHERS

Northern Mockingbird .....	sh				C	C
Sage Thrasher .....	s					O
Brown Thrasher .....						A
Bendire's Thrasher .....						A
Curve-billed Thrasher .....						A
Crissal Thrasher .....	s				R	R
LeConte's Thrasher .....						

## PIPITS

Water Pipit .....	f					C
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## WAXWINGS

Cedar Waxwing .....	h					U
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## SILKY-FLYCATCHERS

Phainopepla .....	s					U
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## SHRIKES

Northern Shrike .....						A
Loggerhead Shrike .....	sf				U	U

## STARLINGS

European Starling .....	hf				C	C
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## VIREOS

Bell's Vireo .....						A
Solitary Vireo .....	sh					O
Warbling Vireo .....	sh					A
Red-eyed Vireo .....						

SPECIES HAB SPR SUM FAL WIN NOT

WOOD WARBLERS, TANAGERS,  
SPARROWS & ORIOLES

SPECIES	HAB	SPR	SUM	FAL	WIN	NOT
Tennessee Warbler						
Orange-crowned Warbler	r				C	
Nashville's Warbler	rs				A	
Virginia's Warbler	s					
Lucy's Warbler						
Northern Parula				A		
Yellow Warbler	rh			R		
Chestnut-sided Warbler				A		
Magnolia Warbler						
Cape May Warbler				A		
Black-throated Blue Warbler						
Yellow-rumped Warbler	rsh			C		
Black-throated Gray Warbler	sh			A		
Townsend's Warbler	sh			O		
Hermit Warbler	sh					
Prairie Warbler						
Palm Warbler				A		
Bay-breasted Warbler						
Cerulean Warbler						
Black-and-white Warbler	hr			O		
American Redstart	rh			R		
Ovenbird						
Northern Waterthrush	r			O		
MacGillivray's Warbler	rs					
Common Yellowthroat	mr	U		U		
Wilson's Warbler	rs			O		
Yellow-breasted Chat	r	O				
Summer Tanager	h			A		
Western Tanager	hs			O		
Pyrrhuloxia		A		A		
Rose-breasted Grosbeak						
Black-headed Grosbeak	hs					
Blue Grosbeak	rs	U		A		
Lazuli Bunting	rs					
Indigo Bunting				A		
Dickcissel						
Green-tailed Towhee	s			R		
Rufous-sided Towhee	s			R		
Abert's Towhee	s	C		C		
American Tree Sparrow				A		
Chipping Sparrow	h			R		
Brewer's Sparrow	fs			U		
Black-chinned Sparrow						
Vesper Sparrow	f			U		
Lark Sparrow	fs			R		
Black-throated Sparrow	s					
Sage Sparrow	fs			U		
Lark Bunting	fs			O		
Savannah Sparrow	f	O		C		
Grasshopper Sparrow		A		A		
Fox Sparrow	rs			O		
Song Sparrow	rm	R		U		
Lincoln's Sparrow	rf			C		
Swamp Sparrow	m			O		
White-throated Sparrow	rsf			O		
Golden-crowned Sparrow	rsf			O		
White-crowned Sparrow	rsf			C		
Harris' Sparrow	sf			O		

SPECIES HAB SPR SUM FAL WIN NOT

WOOD WARBLERS, TANAGERS,  
SPARROWS & ORIOLES

SPECIES	HAB	SPR	SUM	FAL	WIN	NOT
Dark-eyed Junco	sf					U
McCown's Longspur	f					O
Lapland Longspur	f					O
Chestnut-collared Longspur	f					O
Bobolink				A		
Red-winged Blackbird	fm			C		C
Tricolored Blackbird						A
Western Meadowlark	f			U		C
Yellow-headed Blackbird	mf			C		U
Brewer's Blackbird	fh			O		C
Great-tailed Grackle	mf			U		U
Bronzed Cowbird						
Brown-headed Cowbird	fhs			U		C
Orchard Oriole						A
Hooded Oriole	h			U		A
Northern Oriole	hrs			R		A
Scott's Oriole						A
<b>FINCHES</b>						
Purple Finch	rh					O
House Finch	hs			C		C
Red Crossbill						
Pine Siskin	rsh					R
Lesser Goldfinch	a			R		U
Lawrence's Goldfinch	s					R
American Goldfinch	sr					R
<b>OLD WORLD SPARROWS</b>						
House Sparrow	h			C		C

## Mammals

All mammals listed are considered resident species with the exception of the bats, which migrate on a seasonal basis like many of the birds. Families follow that of *A Field Guide to the Mammals* By Burt and Grossenheider.

## SHREWS

Desert Shrew

## FREETAIL BATS

Mexican Freetail Bat  
Pocketed Freetail Bat  
Big Freetail Bat

## CATS

Bobcat

## RABBITS/HARES

Desert Cottontail  
Blacktail Jackrabbit

## DOGS

Coyote  
Desert Kit Fox  
Gray Fox

## RACCOONS

Raccoons

## LEAFNOSE BATS

California Leafnose Bat

## SQUIRRELS/CHIPMUNKS

Roundtail Ground Squirrel  
Antelope Ground Squirrel

## PLAINNOSE BATS

California Myotis  
Western Pipistrel  
Big Brown Bat  
Spotted Bat  
Hoary Bat  
Western Yellow Bat  
Pallid Bat  
Long-tongued Bat

## WEASELS, SKUNKS,

## BADGERS

Striped Skunk  
Spotted Skunk  
Badger

## POCKET GOPHERS

Valley Pocket Gopher

## **WHITE FOOTED MICE**

Cactus Mouse  
Deer Mouse

## **POCKET/KANGAROO MICE AND**

### **KANGAROO RATS**

Desert Pocket Mouse  
Little Pocket Mouse  
Desert Kangaroo Rat  
Spiny Pocket Mouse  
Merriam Kangaroo Rat  
Longtail Pocket Mouse

## **WOODRATS**

Desert Woodrat  
Whitethroated Woodrat

## **VOLES, MUSKRATS**

Muskrat

## **OLD WORLD RATS, MICE**

House Mouse  
Black Rat  
Norway Rat

# **Amphibians and Reptiles**

These reptiles are found on brushy areas on the Refuge and desert habitat surrounding the Refuge.

## **AMPHIBIANS**

Bullfrog  
Leopard frog  
Red-spotted Toad

## **REPTILES**

### **Lizards**

Side-blotched Lizard  
Leopard Lizard  
Long-tailed Brush Lizard  
Desert Horned Lizard  
Flat-tailed Horned Lizard  
Desert Spiny Lizard  
Western Whiptail Lizard

### **Snakes**

Gopher Snake  
Common Kingsnake  
Checkered Garter Snake  
Western Rattlesnake  
Western Blind Snake  
Coachwhip Snake  
Western Patch-nosed Snake  
Desert Glossy Snake

# **FISH**

Very few fish can tolerate the high salinity of the Salton Sea. In 1950 attempts were made to introduce several marine fish. These attempts resulted in the largest inland fishery in California.

Orangemouth Corvina  
Sargo  
Gulf Croaker  
Striped Mullet  
Threadfin Shad  
Sailfin Molly

Desert Pupfish  
Longjaw Mudsucker  
Mosquitofish  
Red Shiner  
California Killifish  
Tilapia

# **Information**

Additional information may be obtained by writing:

Refuge Manager  
Salton Sea NWR  
P.O. Box 120  
Calipatria, CA 92233  
(619) 348-5278