

Five Birds to Look for on Dictionary Hill

May 2020

Dictionary Hill Open Space Advocates

If you are taking your social distancing exercise on Dictionary Hill here are just five birds that you may want to look for. The human world has slowed right down but life is buzzing on our hill.

Take your camera to record the wild life and views.

Post your photos to Facebook.

California Thrasher



Our California Thrasher is certainly not spectacular. You will pick it out by the remarkable down curved bill and the song of the male.

Habitat: Chaparral and lowland habitat with dense low bushes. Present in many of the canyons of San Diego.

Size: Length 12" Wingspan 12.5"

Look for: Dull brown bird with characteristic prominent down curving bill. Ground feeder. Fan tail.

Listen for: Varied song like a mockingbird , but not as tuneful. They will mimic other birds.

Red Shouldered Hawk



It's always spectacular to see a hawk soaring overhead. This is one you may well spot on Dictionary Hill

Habitat: Oak and eucalyptus woodland where they can perch and hunt. Frequently by rivers, swamps and lakes.

Size: Length 17" Wingspan 40"

Look for: Gliding hawk with russet underwing. Pairs often soar together. Nests are a platform of sticks.

Listen for: Vocal. Repeated shrill scream. Usually heard before it is seen. The call is the give away.

Range: West coast . Numbers falling in east coast states.

Spotted Towhee



The Spotted Towhee is one of those easy to identify birds, but you will need to look for him in the undergrowth.

Habitat: Open woods with thick undergrowth. Coastal Sage Scrub. Occasionally in suburban gardens

Size: Length 8.5" Wingspan 10.5 "

Look for: Timid ground feeder with conspicuous russet sides and dark wings with spots.

Listen for: High pitched slow burst followed by a rapid trill.

Range: South west including Colorado.

Cooper's Hawk



The Cooper's Hawk will swoop on smaller birds and catch them mid flight.

Habitat: Forests and open woodlands. Seen in San Diego canyons and areas of coastal sage scrub.

Size: Length 16.5" Wingspan 31"

Look for: Striped tail and wings. Grey blue back. Hunts by swooping on small mammals and birds.

Listen for: Loud repeated cack cack cack.

Range: Throughout the lower 48 and northern Mexico. Migrates from northern states in winter.

Anna's Hummingbird



The Anna's and the Allen's are the most common hummingbirds on Dictionary Hill. The Costa's and Rufous are rarer sights.

Habitat: Urban gardens, chaparral, coastal sage scrub and open woods. Lower mountain slopes

Size: Length 4" Wingspan 5.25

Look for: Tiny hovering bird feeding on flowers. Male has iridescent red hood. Female is iridescent green. Male displays by hovering at a great height and diving vertically.

Listen for: Faint chipping . **Range:** West coast only

Audubon bird identification app

Audubon produce a superb app which has every birdspecies in the US, each with a set of photographs together with identification descriptions, range maps, feeding patterns, habitats and even recordings of bird songs you can click on. And it'll only cost you \$1.99 .