



Bird Checklist for Kids



City of Rocks National Reserve Castle Rocks State Park



One of the fun reasons to visit a park is to see wild animals, as small as a beetle to as big as a moose! But seeing a wild animal often means being very still and quiet so that they feel safe going about their business of hunting, exploring, and making a home. Most animals are asleep or hiding during the day, but not birds. They are often easy to find when they sing or make calls, fly close to us, or come to bird feeders and baths.

City of Rocks and Castle Rocks have 179 different species of birds. Only 10 kinds of birds are listed here. Let's see how many you can find with a few hints from this field guide.

✓ PUT A CHECK MARK NEXT TO THE BIRDS YOU HAVE FOUND!

Golden Eagle

This large bird of prey has a wingspan of 6.5 feet! Look for them perched on power poles in the wide-open ground west of Almo and nesting on tall cliffs.



American Kestrel

The male kestrel is very colorful. He is often seen perched on powerlines, watching the ground below for signs of movement from perhaps a mouse. Check out the powerlines on the dirt road to Castle Rocks.



Northern Flicker

A Flicker is a type of woodpecker and a noisy one at that. Sometimes he hammers away for food, but more often to "talk" to other flickers. Flickers love to eat ants, so they feed mostly on the ground or perch on fence posts to watch for danger.



Black-billed Magpie

A magpie is quickly identified by its very long tail feathers of contrasting black and white body. In just the right light the feathers also reflect a shimmering blue or dark green. Magpies spend most of the time walking around looking for food. Watch for them in flight across open ground.



Common Raven

The raven is like a big crow that usually is found in pairs or small groups instead of large flocks. Ravens like the wide-open spaces and can be mistaken for a soaring hawk.



Mountain Chickadee

This bird is named after its call. Can you say, "chick-a-dee-dee-dee?" This busy little songbird is quite common but bashfully hides in the cover of branches and leaves. Listen for their call near woods and forests.



Juniper Titmouse

This all-gray bird with a pointy tuft of feathers lives in juniper trees, feeding on seeds and insects. Your best chance to see this bird is in the juniper or pinyon trees around Smoky Mountain Campground.



Townsend's Solitaire

This bird is related to robins and thrushes. Solitaires always seem to be alone, giving out a single call note in the silence of the woods. But listen closely, that one note is often answered by another farther away. The best place to hear one is Bath Rock parking area on a quiet day.



Song Sparrow

Like its name would suggest, this bird loves to sing. It's a good thing too, because song sparrows make their home in the thick brush along streams and willow thickets and are hard to see. Be patient and one may pop up and sing for you. Look for them on Almo Creek at Castle Rocks.



Cassin's Finch

At City of Rocks, the best place to learn the difference between a Cassin's Finch and its nearly look-alike cousin the house finch, is to watch the birds at the visitor center feeders. Both kinds of finches feed side by side, but the Cassin's has a tuft of red feathers on its head and less red on the belly. The Cassin's Finch spends most of the year in the high country of the park, and the House Finch prefers the farmland, but in winter they both take advantage of the free food.



How many species of birds did you find?

Did you see other birds you could identify?

When you visit a park or nature center, see if they have a bird walk planned. The best way to learn how to identify birds is to go with someone who is familiar with the birds of that area.