

# Birds in Delta

Delta is a premier birding area located on the *Fraser River Estuary* and *Boundary Bay*. It is a vital stopover on the *Pacific Flyway*. The Ladner Christmas bird count is often the highest in Canada with over 140 species.

## Bald Eagle

This very large bird of prey can be seen throughout the year, often near water. It feeds on fish, carrion, and birds such as ducks and gulls. The speckled brown juvenile takes 4 years to acquire the white head and tail and yellow beak of an adult.



## Northern Harrier

A ground-nesting, resident raptor, with distinctive white rump and V-shaped flight. It flies low to “harry” prey such as small mammals and birds. Commonly seen in winter in marshes and fields, especially near Boundary Bay. The female is brown, the male grey.



## Red-tailed Hawk

This is a very common hawk in Delta, found year-round in open habitats, woodlands, and highway corridors. It feeds on small mammals. Adults have a distinctive red tail and dark leading edges on the wings.



## Peregrine Falcon

The falcon's long wings are sharply pointed in flight and its distinct dark moustache stands out against a whitish bib and dark grey upper parts. It dives at high speed to catch prey such as shorebirds. It is commonly seen August to mid-May.



## Short-eared Owl

This owl often flies during daylight hours in winter, in open marsh or fields near Boundary Bay and Roberts Bank. It has a large, round head with dark eye patches and yellow eyes. It feeds on rodents. It hunts by using both sight and sound.



## Great Horned Owl

Look for this resident owl in large trees where it roosts during the day. It is dark brown with large ear tufts. It swallows all but its larger prey items whole – the bones, fur and feathers are then regurgitated in the form of pellets.



## Golden-crowned Sparrow

A western sparrow, wintering in Delta. Flocks feed on the ground in agricultural areas, dykes and parks. In winter plumage, golden head stripe may be faint. One of 12 or so sparrow species regularly occurring in region. The related White-crowned Sparrow nests in Delta.



## Dark-eyed Junco

A resident sparrow, found year-round but more common in winter. Local subspecies has a white belly, black head, brown back and sides. Flocks feed on the ground, scratching for seeds and insects. It flashes the white edges of its tail when it flies.



## Red-winged Blackbird

The song of this marsh-dweller is a familiar spring sound. The male's plumage is jet-black with bright red shoulder patches edged with yellow. Females resemble sparrows but are longer-billed and more heavily streaked. It nests in freshwater cattail marshes and winters in flocks in agricultural areas.



## House Finch

A familiar garden finch, males have pink-red head, throat and rump. Its back, wings and underparts are streaked brown. Found locally year-round, it feeds on seeds, flowers, leaves and fruit. Purple Finch is found here too.



## American Goldfinch

A small finch with a loud, tuneful song. The breeding male is bright yellow and black; the female is more muted brownish yellow. This seed eater is a common breeding bird in rural Delta wherever there are bushes, hedgerows and small trees.



## Pine Siskin

A small finch with brown-streaked body, wings with small patches of yellow, and white wing bars. Very common some years, it forages on the ground and in trees for seeds and insects. When eating from conifers it often hangs upside down.



## Red-breasted Nuthatch

A colourful bird, with a striped head and rust-red underparts. It is resident year-round in forests and well-treed gardens. Unlike Brown Creeper, nuthatches can climb headfirst down trees as well as up. It feeds on seeds and nuts, hoarding excess food by wedging into bark.



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Look for this small, well-camouflaged bird climbing up the trunks of conifers, its brown plumage blending perfectly with its surroundings. It is resident in Delta forests and well-treed neighbourhoods but easily over-looked. Its song is high and tinkling.



## American Robin

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## Varied Thrush

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## Cedar Waxwing

This striking songbird is often seen in small flocks. It arrives in mid-May and most have left by November; a few overwinter. Pink-brown plumage and yellow-tipped tail are diagnostic. A fruit-eater, it can become intoxicated on fermented berries in winter.



## Yellow-rumped Warbler

This warbler is very common in spring and fall migration; some occur year-round. Yellow rump and flanks are distinctive in all plumages. Most have yellow throat (Audubon's); Myrtle's is white. About 10 other warbler species occur on migration.



## Spotted Towhee

This large, secretive, resident sparrow lives in dense undergrowth. It has red eyes, a white-spotted, black back, black breast, white belly, and rufous sides. It eats insects, spiders, seeds and fruits. Listen for the towhee's harsh and trilling calls to locate it.



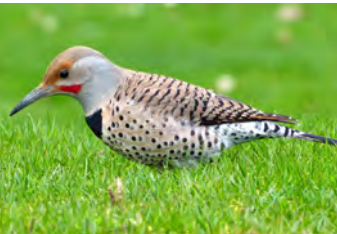
## Downy Woodpecker

The smallest North American woodpecker, this bird is black and white with a red hindcrown patch in males. Found locally year-round, it feeds on insects and seeds and lays up to 7 eggs which are incubated for 12 days by both parents.



## Northern Flicker

A common, resident woodpecker that feeds on insects on the ground and excavates a nest hole in snags. It has a distinctive white rump, often visible in flight. Buffy underparts are spotted and the underneath of its wings are red.



## Tree Swallow

This swallow has a shiny blue back and white underparts. It is the first swallow to return in spring to its nesting grounds in Delta. It feeds on insects, caught in flight. It often nests near water in trees and nest boxes; look for it in summer in Boundary Bay Regional Park.



## Barn Swallow

This once common swallow is now endangered, although still seen regularly in Delta. It has blue-black upper parts, red-brown forehead, chin and throat, and deeply forked tail. It nests in barns and sheds and feeds on insects.



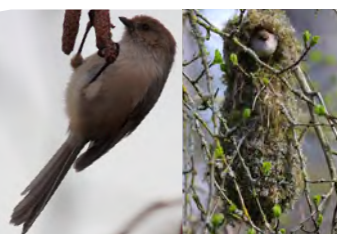
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A very common garden and woodland bird, resident year-round in Delta. It has conspicuous black cap, bib and white cheeks. Grey back and buff flanks distinguish it from Chestnut-backed Chickadee. It feeds on insects, seeds, berries and is lively and vocal.



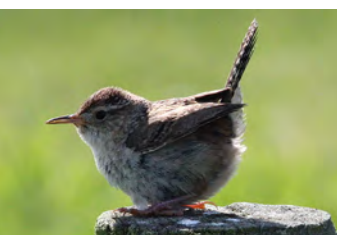
## Bushtit

Tiny bird with grey-brown upper parts, pale belly and a long tail. Found locally year-round, it feeds on aphids and other insects, spiders, and seeds. 5-7 eggs are laid in a suspended, gourd-shaped nest woven from plants and lichens. In winter flocks of 50 or more are not uncommon.



## Marsh Wren

A noisy cattail marsh dweller, more often heard than seen. It is reddish brown above, paler below with a prominent white eyebrow. It can be found year-round in Delta but is most vocal and visible in spring. Bewick's and Pacific Wrens are found here too.



Photographs and text contributed by the



**DELTA  
NATURALISTS'  
SOCIETY**  
deltanaturalists.org



### Great Blue Heron

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### Black-crowned Night-Heron

This species is rare in B.C. and is best seen at Reifel Bird Sanctuary where a few winter annually (September to April). It has a shorter neck than the Great Blue Heron. This stocky bird mainly hunts for fish at night.



### Sandhill Crane

A tall, stately bird with very long legs; it flies with outstretched neck. Groups are seen in fields during migration and at Reifel Bird Sanctuary, where a pair regularly nests. They have grey plumage and a red patch on the head.



### Trumpeter Swan

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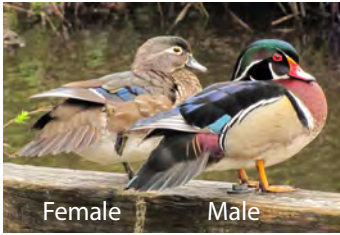
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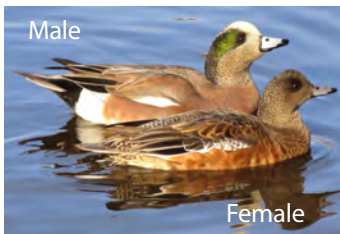
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A sea goose that migrates through Delta, with some wintering here in shallow bays with eelgrass. Brant flocks fly over the sea and forage on eelgrass and other aquatic plants. Look for them on or near the beach at 12th Ave. dyke, Beach Grove, from November to May.



### Wood Duck

This beautiful duck is a fairly common resident, nesting in tree cavities and nest boxes. Note the female's tear-drop shaped white patch around the eye. Male gives thin, high whistle when alarmed. Find them in the South Arm Marshes and other wet woodlands.



Male

Female

### American Wigeon

Flocks of wigeon are a very common winter sight in ponds and bays of Delta. This dabbling feeds on aquatic plants. It is known as "baldpate" for its white forehead and crown. Among these ducks you may see a Eurasian Wigeon, similar but with a rusty-red head.

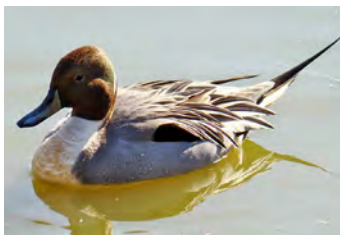


Female

Male

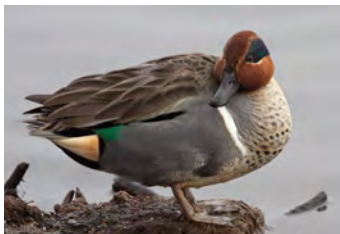
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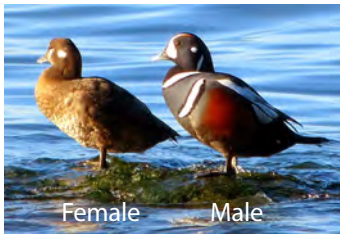
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The male of this species has a long "pin" tail. It is an abundant winter visitor, found in marshes, ponds and fields. It dabbles in shallow water, feeding on plants and small aquatic animals. Seen from September to mid-May.



### Green-winged Teal

This common winter visitor is the smallest of the ducks and is seen on marshes, ponds and bays, dabbling to forage. Often seen with other ducks. Look for it at Boundary Bay Regional Park, near the 12th Ave. dyke.



Female

Male

### Harlequin Duck

This diving duck is a winter visitor to rocky shorelines. It feeds on molluscs. Pairs form in spring and leave to nest on mountain streams. Look for it off the Tsawwassen ferry jetty.

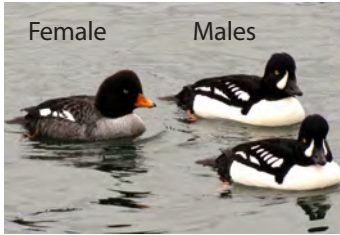


Female

Male

### Bufflehead

This small diving duck arrives in large numbers in mid-October to overwinter. It can be found on any body of water – freshwater ponds, marine bays - diving for snails, insects and worms. They nest in holes in trees.



Female

Males

### Barrow's Goldeneye

Flocks of this diving duck winter in salt-water. It is seen in Delta from September to April. White face patch of male Barrow's is crescent-shaped while that of Common Goldeneye is round. Look for both species in deeper coastal water.



Male

Female

### Hooded Merganser

A fish-eating duck frequenting quiet backwaters, sloughs, ponds and bays. They are often seen in pairs; the male and female have very different plumage. Red-breasted and Common Mergansers are also found in Delta.



A

B

### Double-crested Cormorant & Pelagic Cormorant

A The Double-crested is distinguished by its orange-yellow throat patch. B The Pelagic is smaller with a thin bill and has a white flank patch in summer. Both dive for fish and are commonly seen on the coast.



### Black Oystercatcher

This striking shorebird is common on rocky coastlines where it feeds on mussels and other shellfish. Look along the Tsawwassen ferry jetty, where pairs frequently nest on the beach. Be careful where you step; it lays its eggs on the ground.



### Killdeer

The Killdeer is a resident shorebird but many also migrate through in spring and fall. It is identified by its double neck band and by its kill-dee kill-dee call. It prefers open habitats like road edges and plowed fields, and nests on the bare ground.



### Greater Yellowlegs

This common spring and fall migrant forages on muddy shorelines. It has long yellow legs and a long, slightly upturned bill. It wades in the shallows of mud flats and ponds to feed on small invertebrates. A few winter in Delta. The smaller Lesser Yellowlegs also occurs on migration.



### Western Sandpiper

This is the most abundant migrant shorebird on the B.C. coast; flocks of up to 100,000 are reported during the peak of migration. Look for flocks from April to early May and July to October. It feeds on coastal mudflats, such as Brunswick Point and Boundary Bay.



### Dunlin

The Dunlin is larger than the Western Sandpiper and has a drooping bill. The breeding adult has a distinctive black belly, seen locally in April and May. It is a very common winter visitor, on bays, tidal flats and agricultural fields. Very large, swirling flocks move with precision - an awe-inspiring sight.



B

A

### Glaucous-winged Gull & Ring-billed Gull

Many gull species occur in Delta, and most are fairly similar in colour, with juveniles usually darker than adults. A Glaucous-winged Gull is larger than the B Ring-billed Gull; the latter has a black ring on its bill. Both are found year-round.



### Caspian Tern

This large tern visits Delta in summer. It is often seen diving for fish in Boundary Bay, or flying overhead, calling raucously. It has pale grey back and wings, white underparts, a black cap, coral red bill, and slightly forked tail.



### Band-tailed Pigeon

The largest pigeon in North America, adults are purple-grey with a thin white band on nape; legs and feet are yellow. It is an uncommon year-round resident, preferring coniferous and mixed forests and foraging on nuts, seeds, berries, and insects.



### Eurasian Collared-Dove

This pale grey dove, a native of Europe and Asia, moved into Delta as part of an overall "invasion" of North America since the 1980s. It is now a year-round resident, feeding mostly on seeds on the ground, and is common around farms. Note dark collar and pink feet.



### Anna's Hummingbird

One of two species of hummingbirds found in Delta, the Anna's is a year-round resident. The male has bronzed-green upper parts, grey below and an iridescent crimson red crown and throat. They consume more insects than any other hummingbird in North America.



### Rufous Hummingbird

Slightly smaller than the Anna's, the male Rufous has a bright red-orange throat and mostly rufous-red plumage. It breeds locally in summer, moving to Mexico in winter. This species nests the furthest north of all hummers. It often returns to the same feeder every year.



### Steller's Jay

This species is the western equivalent of the blue jay. It has a black head with a crest, and a dark blue body. It is found in forests and well-treed suburban areas year-round. Feeds on seeds, nuts, fruits and small invertebrates. It is B.C.'s Provincial Bird!

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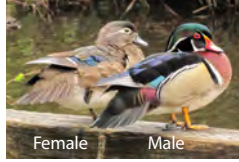
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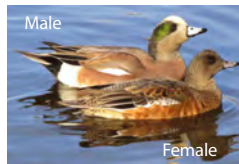
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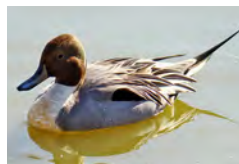
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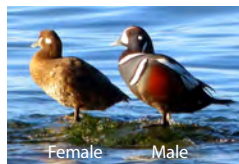
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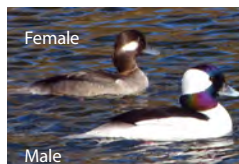
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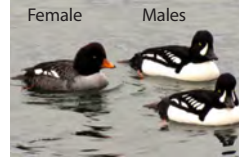
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**B** The Pelagic is smaller with a thin bill and has a white flank patch in summer. Both dive for fish and are commonly seen on the coast.



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The Killdeer is a resident shorebird but many also migrate through in spring and fall. It is identified by its double neck band and by its kill-dee kill-dee call. It prefers open habitats like road edges and plowed fields, and nests on the bare ground.



### Greater Yellowlegs

This common spring and fall migrant forages on muddy shorelines. It has long yellow legs and a long, slightly upturned bill. It wades in the shallows of mud flats and ponds to feed on small invertebrates. A few winter in Delta. The smaller Lesser Yellowlegs also occurs on migration.



### Western Sandpiper

This is the most abundant migrant shorebird on the B.C. coast; flocks of up to 100,000 are reported during the peak of migration. Look for flocks from April to early May and July to October. It feeds on coastal mudflats, such as Brunswick Point and Boundary Bay.



### Dunlin

The Dunlin is larger than the Western Sandpiper and has a drooping bill. The breeding adult has a distinctive black belly, seen locally in April and May. It is a very common winter visitor, on bays, tidal flats and agricultural fields. Very large, swirling flocks move with precision - an awe-inspiring sight.



### Glaucous-winged Gull & Ring-billed Gull

Many gull species occur in Delta, and most are fairly similar in colour, with juveniles usually darker than adults.  
**A** Glaucous-winged Gull is larger than the  
**B** Ring-billed Gull; the latter has a black ring on its bill. Both are found year-round.



### Caspian Tern

This large tern visits Delta in summer. It is often seen diving for fish in Boundary Bay, or flying overhead, calling raucously. It has pale grey back and wings, white underparts, a black cap, coral red bill, and slightly forked tail.



### Band-tailed Pigeon

The largest pigeon in North America, adults are purple-grey with a thin white band on nape; legs and feet are yellow. It is an uncommon year-round resident, preferring coniferous and mixed forests and foraging on nuts, seeds, berries, and insects.



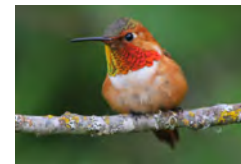
### Eurasian Collared-Dove

This pale grey dove, a native of Europe and Asia, moved into Delta as part of an overall "invasion" of North America since the 1980s. It is now a year-round resident, feeding mostly on seeds on the ground, and is common around farms. Note dark collar and pink feet.



### Anna's Hummingbird

One of two species of hummingbirds found in Delta, the Anna's is a year-round resident. The male has bronzed-green upper parts, grey below and an iridescent crimson red crown and throat. They consume more insects than any other hummingbird in North America.



### Rufous Hummingbird

Slightly smaller than the Anna's, the male Rufous has a bright red-orange throat and mostly rufous-red plumage. It breeds locally in summer, moving to Mexico in winter. This species nests the furthest north of all hummers. It often returns to the same feeder every year.