

## Bird Podcast Transcript

Addison: Hello and welcome back to Prairie City Podcast. My name is Addison and with me I have...

Peter: Peter!

A: And once again we have Max the Environmental Scientist with us, how you doing Max?

Max: Great! Thanks for having me again!

P: Welcome back again Max

M: Appreciate it

A: So today we are covering birds and I know last time we covered snakes in the park and we decided that today would be a good idea to go the opposite direction and go up in the air and talk about birds. So max, we'll start right off the bat, what are the types of birds at the park.

M: We have many types, we have almost 150 species recorded on our master species list that Prairie City. From raptors to swallows to black birds and everything in between.

A: Okay, so what are raptors, what are those?

M: So raptors are what many would call birds of prey. They're birds that hunt for their sustenance they eat rodents, small birds and other things of that nature.

A: What's a notable raptor?

M: So, here you will find a bunch. Red Tail Hawks, you'll find Swanson's hawks, we have northern harriers, white tailed kites, and American kestrel, Prairie falcons and occasionally you might even see a bald eagle flying overhead if you're lucky.

A: That's really cool I've never seen a Bald Eagle in person. So what are these raptors preferred habitat or nesting location?

M: Raptor's you will typically find in nests in the top of trees. They trees they you would see them in are the Fremont Cottonwood trees and Blue oak or Interior Live oak trees in the Eastern end of the park. We currently do have active Red Tail hawks and Swanson's Hawks nests in both of those types of trees in the park.

A: Okay! What about some of the other birds? What are some notable nesting locations for them?

M: So, there are some birds called Swallows, Cliff and Barn Swallows that actually like to nest in our parking lots at the shade ramadas. They also like to nest, you might see them on a highway under an over pass and that can be a management challenge for us. Then other birds such as Kill Deer which are a small Plover they build their nests in gravel roads, so they've learned to adapt to our situation even more here at Prairie City. Other ones like a Western Meadow Lark they might do their nests in Grasslands in our grasses.

A: Okay, so you mentioned that the Raptors they eat small rodents and stuff what time of the day can you see them hunting and how do they hunt for these animals?

M: Many of these birds and things like mammals often do all their hunting at either dawn, dusk or night time nocturnally you'll see a lot of birds hunt throughout the day. A Northern Harrier is a really interesting one to watch because it flies really low to the ground, it'll soar to the ground and it will eat its meal still on the ground rather than returning to the nest for meal time.

A: Okay, so what are ground nesting birds?

M: SO ground nesting birds are like the name says they build their nests on the ground rather than in shrubs or trees. They often eat insects and some of these like the Western Meadow Lark might become prey to snakes or other raptors but we have a lot of these types of birds in the park and that's why it's important sometimes when we are doing maintenance work in the park that we check the areas for these ground nesting birds so that we don't cause any problems.

A: What type of defense mechanisms or evolution products have these ground nesting birds come up with to keep their eggs safe?

M: Well, I talked just a couple of minutes ago about the Kill Deer and they're quite interesting. They don't even need a nest. They will just lay their eggs, usually two to 4 eggs in gravel but their eggs have colorations that really camouflage well. It's really hard to find these eggs. So, they've managed to camouflage the eggs to basically make it look like their surroundings. You find that with a lot of ground nesters that it can be hard to find these nests, they're really deep into the grasses and they really know how to camouflage their nests quite well.

A: Are there any protected bird species in the park?

M: There are so there is Swanson's Hawks which are a threaten species of course according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. We have three confirmed nesting sites for that species of bird. There are also Tri-colored Black birds which fly through the park and they colonize one of the neighboring properties they fly in quite large flocks and they are listed as a species of Special concern federally. They are underneath review for permeant threaten or endangered status by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife currently. Still waiting to find out what their official permanent status will be.

A: As an Environmental Scientist I know you do some monitoring in the park to monitor species that live here, what does that entail?

M: So the most comprehensive thing we do an annual avian survey a point count survey which we do twice in the winter and twice in spring with the natural resources staff and volunteers there are 40 point count locations in the park surveyors conduct a 7 minute bird survey of all birds seen or heard. It's an ongoing monitor effort and our latest annual report of the park included analysis of the last 5 years of bird data.

A: Recreational wise if people want to watch birds what types of opportunities are available for them here at Prairie City?

M: What I would highly recommend would be getting involved in citizen science opportunities. SO these are websites and applications even on your smart phone to allow ordinary citizens to collect data and make an impact on ecological monitoring in their community. At the entrance kiosk at Prairie City SVRA and at the Environmental Training Center you'll see a sheet of paper that includes a wildlife checklists where if you see bird species in the park you can submit it to the natural resources staff we'll add it to our incidental data. There are also websites such as ebird and AllAboutBirds which are great avian resources you can track your data that way and really add to the worlds database of bird data if you're at your own home I would recommend buying a cheap pair of binoculars and an identification book for western birds you can even download an application like Merlin on to your smartphone and learn how to ID birds in your backyard right away install a bird feeder or bird bath, bird house to encourage more usage in your backyard and really have fun with it.

A: So is there anything else we should know about birds in the park?

M: Birds at Prairie City are really important for us in the natural resources staff. We see them as one of the greatest indicators of the ecological health and encouraging healthy habitat for as many species as we can is one of our primary focuses. We just hope that all our riders and all our visitors enjoy their avian interactions as well.

A: So last time I asked you what Prairie City meant to you, so now I want to know what got you into being an Environmental Scientist for Prairie City?

M: Sure, so what got me interested in going to this field in the first place would probably be my Grandfather. Who studied Botany and that was always his passion and growing up in the outdoors and loving the outdoors that what got me interested in conservation and in management of natural resources and then when I moved out to California, California State Parks always seemed like a great fit and I have always been one who's enjoyed balance in management you know you could go work in an wilderness area where everything is fairly well set-up for conservation and for management of species. But I enjoyed the challenge of being in a place like Prairie City. Where you have some challenges and you need to sometimes think outside the box for the best way to manage a high impact recreation like Off-Highway vehicle recreation while still preserving and protecting our resources the best way.

A: Peter do you have anything to ask or to add?

P: Nope, this time I don't.

A: Alright, I would like to thank you for joining us. I'm Addison, I'm here with.

P: Peter

A: And once again we had Max come and visit us today

Both: Thank you!

M: Thanks again guys, really fun.