

# MORRO BAY BIRD GUIDE

*A Snapshot of Birds in the Morro Bay Estuary*



[explorethecoast.info](http://explorethecoast.info)  
[MBNEP.ORG](http://MBNEP.ORG)



## **BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Ceryle alcyon*)

LOCAL SEASON **August–June**

DESCRIPTION **Pigeon-sized, blue-gray above, white below, with slate-blue breast band.**

GENDER DIFFERENCES **Female has additional rufous belly band**

DIET **Fish and crustaceans**



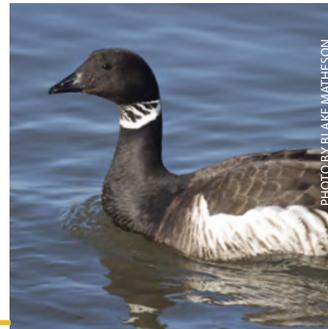
## **BLACK BRANT** (*Branta bernicla nigricans*)

LOCAL SEASON **November–March**

DESCRIPTION **Blackish head, neck, and belly. Dark wings and tail. Much smaller than a Canada goose.**

GENDER DIFFERENCES **No noticeable differences**

DIET **Eelgrass**



## **BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

LOCAL SEASON **Year-round (resident)**

DESCRIPTION **Black crown and back. Grayish wings and white body. White plumes are longest during breeding season.**

GENDER DIFFERENCES **Male is slightly larger**

DIET **Feeds at night on frogs, reptiles, bird chicks, and rodents.**



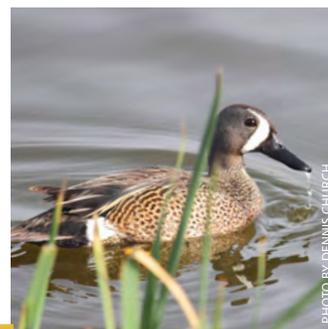
## **BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Anas discors*)

LOCAL SEASON **September–May**

DESCRIPTION **Small dabbling duck, brown with dark speckles on breast, slate-blue head with white crescent behind bill, blue patch on wing.**

GENDER DIFFERENCES **Male is darker than female and has white crescent behind bill**

DIET **Aquatic insects, crustaceans, and vegetation**



## DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

LOCAL SEASON Year-round (resident)

DESCRIPTION Large black bird, orange throat pouch, long neck, white plumes on sides of head during breeding

GENDER DIFFERENCES No noticeable differences

DIET Fish and other aquatic life



## GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

LOCAL SEASON Year-round (resident)

DESCRIPTION Large blue-gray wading bird with long neck that can appear crooked or straight depending on posture. Black plumes extend from forehead. Long green-yellow bill.

GENDER DIFFERENCES Males are slightly larger

DIET Fish, shrimp, rodents, amphibians



## GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

LOCAL SEASON Year-round (resident)

DESCRIPTION Large, white wading bird with black legs and feet, yellowish orange bill. White plumes trail from back during breeding season.

GENDER DIFFERENCES Males are slightly larger

DIET Fish, shrimp, rodents, amphibians



## LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius americanus*)

LOCAL SEASON August–April

DESCRIPTION Shorebird with a long down-curved bill and long legs. Cinnamon-brown above, buff below.

GENDER DIFFERENCES Female's bill is longer than male's

DIET Crustaceans, mollusks, seeds, and berries



## MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

LOCAL SEASON Year-round (resident)

DESCRIPTION Dabbling duck

GENDER DIFFERENCES Male has metallic-green head and neck, white collar, chestnut breast. Female is mottled brown, orange bill marked with black.

DIET Vegetation



## MARbled GODWIT (*Limosa fedoa*)

LOCAL SEASON **August–May**

DESCRIPTION **Large shorebird with very long, slightly up-curved, bicolored bill. Light brown overall, black mottled above, and barring below.**

GENDER DIFFERENCES **No noticeable differences.**

DIET **Insects and mollusks**



## PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax difficilis*)

LOCAL SEASON **April–July**

DESCRIPTION **Green-brown migratory perching bird with white eye ring that expands slightly behind the eye.**

GENDER DIFFERENCES **No noticeable physical differences. Gender distinguished by call.**

DIET **insects**



## PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

LOCAL SEASON **Year-round (resident)**

DESCRIPTION **Raptor with long pointed wings, blue-gray hood and back, brown and cream barring on underside**

GENDER DIFFERENCES **Females are about 20% larger than males**

DIET **Shorebirds and ducks**



## RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

LOCAL SEASON **October–April**

DESCRIPTION **Diving duck with long-pointed tail often cocked by both sexes.**

GENDER DIFFERENCES **Male is rufous with blue bill, white cheeks, black cap (gray in non-breeding season); female is dusky brown in all seasons.**

DIET **Seeds and roots of aquatic plants, insects, and crustaceans**



## SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*)

LOCAL SEASON **August–April**

DESCRIPTION **Medium-sized, dark shorebird with long, straight bill. Plumage changes noticeably between winter and breeding season.**

GENDER DIFFERENCES **No noticeable differences**

DIET **Crustaceans, mollusks, seeds, and berries**



## SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularia*)

LOCAL SEASON Year-round (resident)

DESCRIPTION Small shorebird with tail bobbing and teetering action when on shore. Orange bill. Distinctive bold spots on white belly and breast, except in winter when no spots show.

GENDER DIFFERENCES No noticeable differences

DIET insects, crustaceans, small fish



PHOTO BY DANIEL PETERSON



PHOTO BY MARGIE SAVAGE

## SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*)

LOCAL SEASON Year-round (resident)

DESCRIPTION All white, smaller than great egret, yellow feet and dark bill, with plumes on head, neck, and back.

GENDER DIFFERENCES No noticeable differences

DIET Fish and crustaceans



PHOTO BY ANDREW REDDING



PHOTO BY MARGIE SAVAGE

## TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

LOCAL SEASON March–July

DESCRIPTION Small songbird with deep blue metallic above, white underparts, long pointed wings

GENDER DIFFERENCES Male exhibits glossier feathers than female

DIET insects, particularly beetles and horseflies



PHOTO BY ALAN SCHMIERER



PHOTO BY ALAN SCHMIERER

## WILLET (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*)

LOCAL SEASON Year-round (resident)

DESCRIPTION Large shorebird with long, pointed bill. Black and white pattern on wings.

GENDER DIFFERENCES Females are larger than males

DIET Aquatic insects, mollusks, and worms



PHOTO BY AARON CANBREWS



PHOTO BY GARY ASHLEY

## WESTERN SNOWY PLOVER (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*)

LOCAL SEASON Year-round (resident)

DESCRIPTION Small shorebird, pale tan back, white underparts, dark patches on neck connect to chest, dark legs

GENDER DIFFERENCES Darker markings near the head, crown forms on males during breeding season

DIET Crustaceans, insects, mollusks, marine worms



PHOTO BY MARGIE SAVAGE



PHOTO BY GREG JORDAN