



# Birds of the Southwest

## Pyrrhuloxia



Look for this gray and red relative of the Northern Cardinal in desert scrub habitats. The curved, stubby bill and longer crest of the Pyrrhuloxia can help to differentiate the two birds. Males and females are stocky, and overall gray with red highlights on the crest, wings, and tail. Males also have a red stripe across the belly and on the face. Pyrrhuloxias are fond of seeds and of sunflower in particular, and may visit backyards to feed on the ground.

## Cactus Wren

Look for these lively little wrens near prickly-pear or cholla cacti in the desert or in park settings, and listen for the cranky, scratchy sound of a car that won't start, which is how their call is often described! Cactus Wrens seem to be in constant motion, hopping on the ground and chasing one another around, and will sing loudly any time of day. If your yard has cactus plants, you might someday have Cactus Wrens nesting! They also visit suet feeders and sunflowers.



## Greater Roadrunner



As you travel roads in low deserts and grasslands, keep an eye out for a large, slender bird with a very long tail darting by. Greater Roadrunners have long bills and mottled brown plumage that provides cover in the desert shrubs, and a black crest. In the breeding season, the blue skin behind the eye can take on a reddish hue. When not running, Greater Roadrunners sometimes perch on rocks and fenceposts. Males have a mournful call that sounds similar to a Mourning Dove.

## Verdin

Verdins are tiny, slender birds found in desert scrub environments, often where shrubs and trees are found. Male and female Verdins look alike, with silvery gray bodies, yellow heads, and chestnut patches on their shoulders. Most active in the morning, they move quickly along branches as they hunt for insects, and like the chickadees they resemble, sometimes hang upside down on branches while foraging. Verdins supplement their diet with occasional visits to hummingbird feeders.



## Curve-billed Thrasher



Curve-billed Thrashers are lanky birds with grayish brown plumage, spotted chests, bright orange eyes, and, as their name suggests, a long, curved bill. Found in desert habitats, they can often be seen perched atop cacti or bushes, or heard issuing a whistle that sounds like someone hailing a taxi. They are most active in the morning and prefer to spend time in the shade in the day. They frequent backyards looking for seeds, berries, and water sources.