

The Daly Mansion and Bitterroot Audubon invite you on the *Interpretive Bird Walk*!

A self-guided tour perfect for children and beginning birders!

The Daly Mansion's 40+ acres includes an arboretum with over 500 trees, and a botanic garden with several themed gardens. Wildlife abounds, including butterflies, bees, racoons, squirrels, deer and even the occasional bear! Let's not forget the birds, however, from tiny hummingbirds to majestic eagles. Some call the Bitterroot Valley their home even through the coldest winters.

Volunteers have created nest boxes to invite birds to this beautiful place. Take a walk around to spot some of our local avian friends, and perhaps even see them raising their young! Be sure to watch for nests or nest cavities in the trees as you go.

- Begin your walk in Margaret's Garden just west of the main parking lot, where you'll see a great habitat for several species of birds including **Robins, House Sparrows, Wrens, Juncos, and Nuthatches**. There is a nest box on a stand in the garden and another on a nearby tree, and seeds, berries, insects and a bird bath make this a welcoming spot for our feathered friends.
- Head north down the gravel road past the road heading to the Mansion. Count the trees down this road and find a **Bluebird** house on the east side of the 7th tree. Look to the NE corner of the property and find the **Tree Swallow** house on a post. Tree swallows like open areas and are known to sneak into bluebird nest boxes to set up housekeeping! Swallows are smaller, not as blue, and have more angled pointed wings, to help you tell the difference.
- Backtrack just a bit to continue your stroll on the lawn, heading west towards the Bitterroot Mountains. You'll find a thicket of lilac bushes on your right, which provide cover for **California Quail**. From May to July, look for harried quail guarding their nest or trying to herd as many as 12-16 chicks to safety if they are disturbed. They are very fast runners!
- Continue on along the stand of trees and angle to the right on a short trail. You'll see a **Northern Flicker** box. You might find a bright orange feather on the ground, or see one of these woodpeckers feeding on ants, pulling them up with its long tongue.
- Go back on the lawn heading just a bit further west where you'll see a huge grey nest box on a tree trunk that's the home befitting a **Great Horned Owl**. You may find sizable pellets on the ground – regurgitated bundles that often contain rodent fur or tiny bones from animals that made up the owl's last meal. Owl pellets can be found under trees throughout the Daly Mansion grounds if you take the time to search.
- A house for the **Black-Capped Chickadee** is below and to the left of the owl box. Continue on to a small Butterfly Garden with a white trellis and bench, backed by old apple trees. If you're lucky, you might find a **Calliope Hummingbird** or a **Rufous Hummingbird** looking for nectar if the right tubular flowers are in bloom. They may also pluck spiders or trapped insects from their webs for an easy meal. You might hear the sound of their wings before you see them.
- Walk through the garden on the gravel path heading west. Circle to the right of the Laundry House. Two ancient, sprouted stumps on your right have round holes that may house a flicker, nuthatch, or even a squirrel. Then continue on the dirt road to the West Lawn. The Daly Mansion is now to your left and on

your right is a breathtaking view of the Bitterroot Mountains. Scan the sky to see if you can spot or hear **Canada Geese** flying in a V-formation overhead. In the fall, big Vs of birds migrate south and in spring, they head north, but we have year-round residents as well. Some say the migrating birds honk from behind to encourage those in front to keep up their speed. Females make a higher-pitched *hink* sound while males just *honk*.

- The red Carriage House has a **Bluebird** box and there are more along fence lines around the property. These brightly colored birds like open meadows. Watch for aggressive introduced birds like starlings and house sparrows who sometimes drive bluebirds from their nests.
- Continue down the grassy road past the back of the Mansion. A wooden structure housing electrical equipment is a great angle to see the large tree with a **Bald Eagle** nest (called an aerie). Follow the power line away from the property and see the nest slightly down and to the right. It's easiest to see before the trees leaf out each spring, and eagles have used this nest for many years. When the cows have their calves, eagles will swoop down to feed on the afterbirths.
- Continue walking south and turn left at the bear sculpture. Go through a swale behind The Plunge (swimming pool). Can you find an ancient bird house on your right? Or holes in old trees that would make a good home for a cavity nester?
- Turn left once you get to the service road. Do not go right on this road – it's only for our grounds crew. Bluebird houses can be seen along this fence line, however, to your right and your left.
- The Loafing Shed, also known as the Sugar Shack as it contains supplies used to tap the sugar maples in the winter, has a bluebird box on either side.
- Feel free to continue exploring the grounds, enjoying the manicured lawns and gardens as you go. The alfalfa fields and cow/horse pastures to the north and south of our grounds are home to many rodents and snakes, and you may spot a **Red-Tailed Hawk** flying overhead looking for a meal. Its call is very distinctive, so you may hear it before you see it.

For more information on local birds, contact The Bitterroot Audubon Society at <https://www.bitterrootaudubon.org/>, The Cornell Lab at <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>, or use many of the great resources on-line.

For changes or additions to this information, please contact Becky Lovejoy, MontanaGal35@gmail.com. Information specific to birds seen at the Daly Mansion is especially welcome.

Interpretive Bird Walk Bird Descriptions:



Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

Look for a 5-3/4" dark greenish-blue bird with white underparts, which arrives early in spring from its winter stay in the southern United States. Swallows feed mainly on insects caught in flight, but in winter and early spring they include berries and seeds in their diet.

Tree swallows line their grassy nest with feathers, especially white ones, and will swoop at intruders so don't get too close! The best place to find them is close to water and nesting in tree cavities or nest boxes. Their song is a liquid chattering, repeating the sound: *siyip*.



California Quail (*Callipepla californica*)

Look for a plump mid-sized bird with a jaunty topknot. Quail are attracted to ponds and birdbaths, and visit favorite feeding places in the morning and evening, eating leaves, seeds, fruit, and sometimes insects. Grass-lined nests are often made on the ground

amongst high grass or in thickets, in scrubby country that provides plenty of food and cover. Their call is a rising *chi-ca-go*.



Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)

Look for a 12.5" brown woodpecker who may be drumming loudly on trees, utility poles or buildings to advertise its territory. Flickers excavate a hole in a dead tree or fence post for their nest, or like a nest box located among shrubs, but may be driven out by starlings. Both parents incubate one brood of 5-10 young, with the male taking the night shift. Flickers feed mostly on insects but also eat seeds, berries, suet, and peanut butter. Their call is a rapid, repeated *wick-wick-wick* and a single *kee-yeer*.



Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*)

Look for an 18-25" tall owl, one of the most powerful and fearless birds in the area. The ear tufts give the bird its name, and its golden eyes are mesmerizing. These owls hunt at night for other birds and small mammals including skunks – skunk smell can sometimes lead you to this owl's nest. They prefer old nests of other large birds, and lay one brood of 1-3 eggs.

Their call is *Whoo! Whoo-whoo-whoo! Whoo! Whoo!* Young owls flying with their parents may utter blood-curdling hunger screams.



Black-Capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*)

Look for a 5-1/4" bird with a black cap and bib and white cheeks, seen in flocks in the winter. They eat small insects and their eggs found among twigs and foliage in low tree branches, sunflower seeds and peanuts from feeders, and berries and seeds in the

winter. Chickadees nest in abandoned woodpecker holes, cavities they excavate, or birdhouses, and line the nest with feathers, hair, and plant materials. They are common in open woodlands, thickets, clearings, and suburban areas, and their call is *chick-a-dee-dee-dee*.



Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)
Calliope Hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*)

Watch for hummingbirds as they flit around in the summer, hovering over tubular flowers to sip the nectar or eating small insects as they find them. Their favorite habitats are meadows and shrubby areas where females build intricate nests on horizontal branches protected by overhead foliage. The inside of the nest is covered in plant down and spider webs, and the outside is camouflaged with lichen, moss and bark. Males defend the territory from intruders while the females lay, incubate, and feed two young. The Rufous Hummingbird travels almost 4,000 miles from Alaska to Mexico, the longest migration of any hummingbird. Their wings beat 50-200 times per second, and they can dive bomb at 60 miles per hour! Calliope Hummingbirds are our smallest native bird, only 3-inches long and weighing a tenth of an ounce.



Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

Look for a good-sized brown goose with a black neck and wingtips. Canada geese mate for life, and can be found near water, often going to city parks and golf courses in flocks. Their diet is mostly plants – grasses, sedges, seeds and berries, but occasionally they'll eat insects, small fish, and crustaceans. The female builds a nest near water. It's a shallow bowl of sticks and grasses and lined with down, for her 4-7 eggs. After hatching, the chicks are already feeding themselves in 1-2 days and they can fly at 7-9 weeks. Their calls range from clicks or moans to honks, barks and cackles.



Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*)

Look for a 7" bird with males having bright turquoise-blue plumage and females being brown with blue on the wings and tail. The male builds the nest in a hole in a tree or fissure in a cliff face, or finds a nest box to raise two broods of 4-8 chicks. Bluebirds like open meadows to find insects which make up most of their diet, and fruit when in season. Their call is a low *chur*, *phew*, sung before dawn and stopping when the sun has risen.



Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

Look for a dark brown bird with a white head. Females have an 8-foot wingspan and males are smaller at 6.5-feet. They build massive nests up to 5-feet across, near rivers and lakes where they can find fish to feed on. When food is plentiful, you can see large flocks of them. The bald eagle is the national bird of the U.S., and can live an average of 28 years in the wild or up to 50 years in captivity. Their call is a fairly weak high-pitched whistling or piping sound.



Red Tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Look for a 3.4 to 4.8-foot wingspan on these gorgeous hawks with red tails, that can be seen soaring overhead at dawn when hunting. They like any terrain with open ground, and high perches like scattered trees or utility poles to seek out prey. These hawks nest in tall trees, cliff ledges, and towers or buildings, and lay 2-3 eggs. The male provides most of the food but the female cuts it up into pieces to feed their young – small mammals, birds, snakes, or frogs and toads are common food choices. They may also feed on carrion. Their call is a 2-3 second hoarse, screaming *kee-eeeeee-arr*.