

# Species Identification



Northern Pintail (G. Sorenson)



American Wigeon, female on right (G. Sorenson)

Iceland Gull (Thayer's)



Herring Gull



TheWildernessAlternative (eBird)

# Gulls

## Bonaparte's Gull



Species	Relative Size	Leg Colour	Eye Colour	Bill	Mantle (back)	Wing-tips
Graceous-winged	Large, bulky	Pink	Dark	Large yellow with orange spot, like Herring but usually thicker	Medium grey	Grey
Herring	Large	Pink	Pale	Long, yellow, with orange spot	Light grey	Black
Iceland (Thayer's)	Medium	Deep pink	Darkish	Like Herring but smaller	Light/medium grey	Black, often pale edging
California	Medium	Yellow	Dark	Yellow with black and red spots near tip	Darkish grey	Black
Heermann's	Similar to Ring-billed	Black	Dark	Red with black tip	Dark grey	Black
Ring-billed	Small, but larger than Mew	Yellow	Pale	Yellow with black ring	Light grey	Black
Mew	Small	Yellow-green	Dark	Small/slender, unmarked, yellowish-green	Darkish grey	Black
Bonaparte's	Smallest	Orange-red	Dark	Dark and thin	Light grey	Black

- Challenging to ID, but IDs to species are important for trend data
  - Take photos for help if you are unsure, especially for flocks

# Gulls

Glaucous-winged Gull



Herring Gull



Iceland Gull (Thayer's)



California Gull



Ring-billed Gull



Mew Gull

# Gulls

## Herring Gull



TheWildernessAlternative (eBird)

Less common, but still regular

## Iceland Gull (Thayer's)



More common

Species	Relative Size	Leg Colour	Eye Colour	Bill	Mantle (back)	Wing-tips
Herring	Large	Pink	Pale	Long, yellow, with orange spot	Light gray	Black
Iceland	Medium	Deep pink	Darkish	Like Herring but smaller	Light/medium gray	Black, often pale edging

# Gulls

## California Gull



## Ring-billed Gull



## Mew Gull



Species	Relative Size	Leg Colour	Eye Colour	Bill	Mantle (back)	Wing-tips
California	Medium	Yellow	Dark	Yellow with black and red spots near tip	Darkish gray	Black
Ring-billed	Small, but larger than Mew	Yellow	Pale	Yellow with black ring	Light gray	Black
Mew	Small	Yellow-green	Dark	Small/slender, unmarked, yellowish-green	Medium gray	Black

# Gulls

What is this gull?



Dark wingtips and pink legs = Western or Herring or Iceland

Not dark grey mantle = Herring or Iceland

Dark eye, rounded head, bill appearing thin =

**Iceland Gull**

# Loons

## Common Loon



- Common in winter on our coasts
- Winter plumage dark gray above, white below
- Partial collar
- Large bill and head compared to Pacific Loon

## Pacific Loon



- Form large flocks during migration
- Smaller than Common Loon
  - Bill, head size, body size
- May show chin strap
- Darker colour around eye
- General impression of slimmer bird than COLO, in flight and on water

## Red-throated Loon



- Less frequent on our coasts
- Found in bays, less in open ocean
- Thin bill often tipped up
- Speckled back in winter
- White neck and lower face

# Grebes

## Western Grebe



- Our largest grebe
- Long neck with white throat
- Dark face surrounds red eye
- Thin bill, appears curved up

## Red-necked Grebe



- Smaller than Western Grebe, stockier
- Bigger than Horned Grebe with larger bill
- Yellow-green bill
- Neck often reddish-brown
- Dark eye (not red)

## Horned Grebe



- Most common wintering grebe
- Smaller than other common grebe species
- White face (more than Red-necked)
- Small gray beak



# Cormorants

## Double-crested Cormorant



Marc Hanneman (eBird)

- Our largest cormorant
- Face is yellow/ orange at all times of the year
- Adults are all black, juveniles (like image) have paler throat and chest

## Pelagic Cormorant



Kathryn Keith (eBird)

- Smallest cormorant in BC
- Thin neck and beak
- Breeding adults have white patch
- Glossy black-green overall, generally appear black

## Brandt's Cormorant



- Similar color to Pelagic
- Thicker bill and neck
- Beige throat patch always present
- Found in large groups more than Pelagic
- White plumes in summer on head

# Common Alcids

## Common Murre



- Bigger than guillemot and murrelet
- Long, sharp bill, held at angle
- Dark brown above, white below

## Pigeon Guillemot



- Whiter overall in winter than murres and murrelets
- Bright red feet
- Thinned head and neck
- Small pointy bill

## Marbled Murrelet



Ryan Shaw (eBird)



- Small alcid normally alone or with pair
- Fast, buzzy flight
- White on throat, belly, and white line on back
- All brown breeding plumage

Bigger



Small

# Scoters

## Surf Scoter



- Adult male has white behind head, on forehead, and on orange bill
- Large bill
- Pale eye on adult females

## White-winged Scoter



- White wing patches on males and females
- More evenly sloped forehead
- Bigger than other scoter species

## Black Scoter



- No white markings
- Thinner bill, often with yellow at base
- Females have dark cap and pale cheeks
- More round head shape

# Mergansers

## Common Merganser



- Adult male has distinct green head and red bill
- Long slender bill

## Red-breasted Merganser



- Females have less white on chest and no white spot below bill
- Fluffed head feathers, red chest on males

## Hooded Merganser



- Much smaller merganser
- Females are brownish-red with dark bill and pale/yellow eye
- Males have striking head and chest patterning



# Larger Diving Ducks

## Harlequin Duck



- Adult males are very distinct, even in winter
- Females have two white patches on face

## Barrow's Goldeneye



Brian Hicks (eBird)



Kathryn Keith (eBird)

- Less white on body and tear shaped face patch
- Female usually has mostly yellow bill

## Common Goldeneye



Brian Hicks (eBird)

- Whiter body and round face patch
- Female usually mostly black bill, overlap between species

# Smaller Diving Ducks

## Long-tailed Duck



- Very distinct sea duck
- Bold patterning, long tail
- Pink in bill

## Bufflehead



- Breeding males are very distinct – mostly white
- Females and non-breeding males have single white cheek patch
- Very small size



# Confusing Female Dabbling Ducks

## Mallard



- Orange legs and feet
- Orange beak with some dark (most orange)
- Dark eye stripe
- White feathers on tail
- Blueish speculum (colored feathers on wings during flight)

## Northern Pintail



- **Gray legs and feet**
- Slimmer, longer bird than Mallard
- Plain face
- Dark gray beak

## Gadwall



- Similar to Mallard but overall smaller look
- Less orange on just edges of bill
- Yellow legs
- **White speculum in flight**
- Domed head shape

# Less Confusing Female Dabbling Ducks

## American Wigeon



- Very numerous in migration, and in winter
- **Head shape is distinct to wigeons**
- Small round head, dark shadowing around eye
- Small gray bill with black tip

## Green-winged Teal



- **Smallest dabbler** – recognizable by size
- Green speculum visible
- Face similar to Mallard, but dark gray bill

## Northern Shoveler



- **Large bill is distinct**
- Similar look to Mallard except green speculum
- Orange legs



# Rocky coast shorebirds

## Black Turnstone



- Small, chunky bird
- Thin, short black bill
- White belly contrasting with dark body

## Surfbird



- Larger gray shorebird with thick yellow legs
- Orange base to bill

## Black Oystercatcher



- Distinct large, black shorebird
- Long, bright orange bill