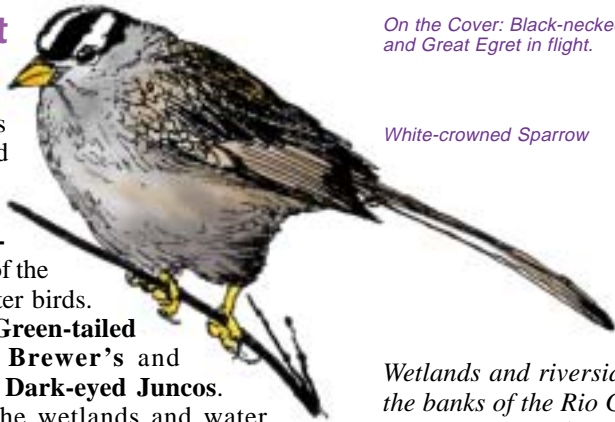


Winter-resident Landbirds

Another group of landbirds nests to our north and winters at Rio Bosque. Sparrows are prominent in this group. The **White-crowned Sparrow** is one of the park's most common winter birds. The uplands also attract **Green-tailed** and **Spotted towhees**, **Brewer's** and **Savannah sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Juncos**. Search the margins of the wetlands and water channels for **Song**, **Lincoln's** and **Swamp sparrows**. The biggest landbird concentrations, though, involve crows and ravens. Thousands of **American Crows** and **Chihuahuan Ravens** roost at the park on winter evenings. They forage throughout the river valley during the day.



White-crowned Sparrow

Wetlands and riverside forests once graced the banks of the Rio Grande in the Paso del Norte region. They were the area's most productive natural habitats, but today they are virtually gone. At Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, the environment is still changing, but in a new way. Here, a diverse partnership is working to bring back meaningful examples of the unique and valuable ecosystems once found in our river valley.

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Migratory Stop-over Habitat

Migration is a critical part of the annual cycle for many bird species. Migratory birds depend on suitable habitat not only on their breeding grounds and wintering grounds, but also along their migratory pathway. Without suitable places to rest and feed as they migrate, birds can arrive at their destination in weakened condition, can arrive late and find suitable habitat already occupied, or might not arrive at all. The Rio Grande valley is an important migratory pathway, and sites like Rio Bosque are vital as stop-over habitat for birds migrating along it.



Painted Bunting

Summer-resident Landbirds

Many of Rio Bosque's birds spend most of the year south of us in Mexico, Central America and South America. They come north only during spring and summer to breed. Rio Bosque becomes a much brighter place when they do! **Western Kingbirds**, **Yellow-breasted Chats**, **Blue Grosbeaks**, **Painted Buntings** and **Bullock's Orioles** are all here in summer. The multi-hued Painted Bunting nests in El Paso only at Rio Bosque, at the very western edge of its breeding range.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo, a summer resident of the river valley, has declined in our region — and throughout the western United States — due to loss of riverside-forest habitat. In 2001, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined the cuckoo in the western U.S. to be a candidate for listing as an endangered or threatened species. Cuckoos once nested at Rio Bosque, but the saltcedar stands they used were cleared during construction of the wetland project. Will the native riverside forests we are working to establish at the park lure Yellow-billed Cuckoos back as a nesting species? It is one of our main restoration goals.

On the Cover: Black-necked Stilt and Great Egret in flight.

BIRDS

of the Rio Bosque



Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

El Paso, Texas

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, as a large natural area next to the Rio Grande with a mosaic of habitats, is tremendously valuable for birds.



Harris's Hawk

Its woodlands, wetlands, developing riparian areas, and shrub-dominated uplands support a rich mix of native river-valley species. And, due to the magic of migration, that mix changes constantly. Some of Rio Bosque's birds are permanent residents, but many are here only in summer, in winter, or as migrants passing through in spring or fall. Each time you visit, the park's birdlife will offer something new. For details on seasonal status of different species, pick up a copy of the park's bird checklist at the Visitor Center.

Permanent Residents

Resident birds of the river valley are well represented at the park. Are you looking for **Gambel's Quail**? You've come to the right place. The combination of shrub-dominated uplands and nearby water makes the park a haven for this species. Other common year-round residents include **Greater Roadrunner**, **Mourning Dove**, **Verdin**, **Crissal Thrasher** and **House Finch**. The thrasher, heard more often than seen, uses its long, deeply curved bill to "thrash" the soil or leaf litter in search of insects.



Gambel's Quail



Mississippi Kite



Crissal Thrasher

Birds of Prey

One other permanent Rio Bosque resident is the fascinating **Harris's Hawk**. Surprisingly social, these hawks often hunt in cooperative groups. In some parts of their range, they also nest cooperatively, with one or more non-breeding individuals helping the nesting pair. They have an extended breeding season: At Rio Bosque, Harris's Hawks have been observed nesting as early as March and as late as November.

Winter is the peak season at Rio Bosque for birds of prey. **Northern Harriers** and **Red-tailed Hawks** are most common, but you can also find **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, **Cooper's Hawks**, **American Kestrels** and the occasional **Merlin** or **Peregrine Falcon**. One of the biggest surprises since creation of the wetland cells in 1997 has been the occasional appearance of an over-wintering **Bald Eagle**. In summer, look for **Mississippi Kites** and **Swainson's Hawks** gliding and soaring overhead. Look for **Burrowing Owls** near their burrows on the large earthen mounds scattered through the park.



Cinnamon Teal

Waterbirds

The addition of water changed both the Rio Bosque landscape and the abundance and variety of birds that use it. In the 18 years before the wetland project was built in 1997, 107 bird species were observed at the park. Some 21 were waterbirds, most just seen flying overhead. Now, 205 bird species have been observed, 71 of them waterbirds! And those waterbirds aren't just flying overhead. They use the park in big numbers when water is present.

By design, the park's wetland cells are very shallow. The vast majority of ducks using the park in winter are dabbling ducks: **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, **Mallard**, **Cinnamon Teal**, **Northern Shoveler**, **Northern Pintail** and **Green-winged Teal**. In some years, 4,000 to 5,000 ducks may be present. If water is present in summer, "Mexican" Mallard and Cinnamon Teal will nest.

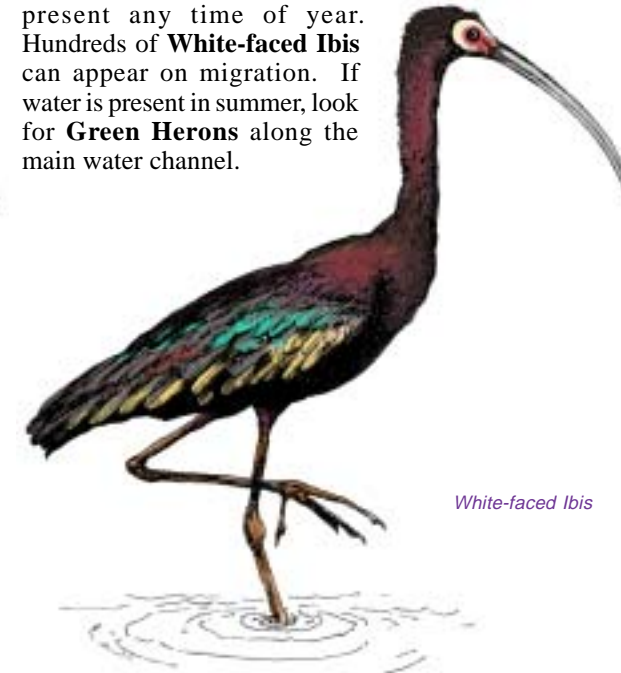


Northern Pintail

Timing is everything. If the park's wetlands have a good mix of very shallow water and exposed mudflats when shorebirds are migrating through, they will stop in good numbers. In winter, when water is more reliably present, look for **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Least Sandpiper**, **Long-billed Dowitcher** and **Wilson's Snipe**. If water is present in summer, both **Black-necked Stilt** and **American Avocet** will nest.



Black-necked Stilt



White-faced Ibis

Shallow water in the wetland cells is also highly attractive to long-legged wading birds. **Great Blue Herons**, **Great Egrets**, **Snowy Egrets** and **Black-crowned Night-Herons** can be present any time of year. Hundreds of **White-faced Ibis** can appear on migration. If water is present in summer, look for **Green Herons** along the main water channel.



Great Egret