

Western Bluebird

Sialia mexicana

In open parklands of the American West, brilliant blue-and-rust Western Bluebirds sit on low perches and swoop lightly to the ground to catch insects. Deep blue, rusty, and white, males are considerably brighter than the gray-brown, blue-tinted females. This small thrush nests in holes in trees or nest boxes and often gathers in small flocks to feed on insects or berries, giving their quiet, chortling calls. You can help out Western Bluebirds by placing nest boxes in your yard or park.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Western Bluebirds are small thrushes that usually perch upright. They are stocky with thin, straight bills and fairly short tails.

Color Pattern

Male Western Bluebirds are shiny blue above with rust-orange extending from a vest on the breast onto the upper back. Females are gray-buff with a pale orange wash on the breast and blue tints to the wings and tail. The throat is blue in males and gray-buff in females, and the lower belly is whitish.

Behavior

These birds are highly social, and usually feed in flocks during the non-breeding season. They hunt for terrestrial insects by dropping to the ground from a low perch. Western Bluebirds also frequently feed on berries in trees. Western Bluebirds rely on trees both for nesting cavities and hunting perches, and also perch on fences and utility lines.

Habitat

Look for Western Bluebirds in open woodland, both coniferous and deciduous. They also live in backyards, burned areas, and farmland, from sea level far up into the mountains.

Cool Facts

- Western Bluebirds have a gentle look, but territory battles can get heated. Rival males may grab each other's legs, tumble to the ground, and then pin their opponent on the ground, stand over him, and jab at him with his bill.
- The oldest known Western Bluebird was 8 years, 8 months old.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 6.3 - 7.5 inches
- Weight - 0.8 - 1.1 ounces

