

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD

Mimus polyglottos



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Range

Mockingbirds are found in just about every habitat type in the state. The males' **territoriality** and constant singing and displaying during the breeding season make them the most noticeable bird in Texas. Often this territoriality takes on the form of early morning singing sessions or diving attacks on other animals or people!



Birds

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD

Mimus polyglottos



Appearance

Length: 10 inches
Wing span: 14 inches
Weight: 1 3/4 ounces

Mockingbirds are medium sized birds, gray above and pale below. They have white wing patches and outer tail feathers, slender black beaks and legs.



Behavior

Habit: Diurnal, altricial, omnivore
Diet: Insects, fruit, crustaceans and small vertebrates
Breeding territory: 1 pair per 20 acres

Unmated male mockingbirds sing more than mated ones. Both sexes sing in the fall to claim winter feeding territories. These areas are often different than their spring breeding territories. Mockingbirds mimic other bird's songs. They have also been known to imitate other sounds they hear such as rusty hinges, whistling and dogs barking. It is thought that the wing-flashing they do helps to flush insects and confuse predators.

Habitat

Mockingbirds are found in all parts of Texas, south and central U.S. and Mexico to Oaxaca. Most mockingbirds are year-round residents but some migrate as far south as southern Mexico, the Bahamas and Greater Antilles.

Mockingbirds & Man

Mockingbirds are one of the most commonly noticed birds in the state. They are either applauded for their audaciousness or cursed for their persistence in **nocturnal** singing or in the defense of their territory. The fact that they enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables hasn't exactly made them gardeners' friends either, although they do eat lots of insects. But like many Texans they are industrious, bold and brash.

Life Cycle

Sexual maturity: One year.

Mating season: Spring and early summer. Mockingbirds usually nest twice a year sometimes 3 or 4 times when conditions are favorable.

Gestation: Eggs hatch in 12-13 days, the young fledge 11-13 days after that.

No. of young: 2-6 usually 3-5. Eggs are blue-green with brown markings.

Legend Has It ...

*When Texas chose the mockingbird as its state bird, the resolution stated that the bird is "a fighter for the protection of his home, falling, if need be, in its defense, like any true Texan..." Its species name comes from the Greek *mimus* to mimic, and *polyglottos* for "many-tongued."*

Now You Know!

- › Only unmated males sing at night.
- › Mockingbirds often form long-term pair bonds.
- › Mockingbirds vigorously defend their territory against many other species including dogs, cats and man!
- › Female mockingbirds often build a new nest while the males finish feeding older fledglings and teaching them to fly.
- › Scientists have found that female mockingbirds are attracted to males that can make the most different sounds.
- › Mockingbirds are the state bird of Texas and one of the few birds found in every kind of habitat, from desert to forest to city.
- › Mockingbirds are thought to raise and lower their wings in order to scare up a meal of insects, frighten snakes and impress their mates.