

PAINTED BUNTING

Passerina ciris



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Range

Painted buntings are common in many parts of Texas. Their habit of remaining in deep brush except when the male sings early in the morning often cause them to be overlooked. When the brightly colored male is noticed, he is often mistakenly thought to be an escaped tropical bird.



Birds

PAINTED BUNTING



Passerina ciris

Appearance

Length: 6 inches

Wing span: 9 inches

Weight: ½ ounce

Male painted buntings have red breasts and rumps, green backs, blue heads and dark wings. Females are greenish above and buff below.

Behavior

Habit: Diurnal, altricial, omnivore

Diet: Seeds and insects

Breeding territory: 1 pair per 30 acres

Male painted buntings vigorously defend their territory against other males occasionally fighting them to the death.

Habitat

Painted buntings are common summer residents in much of Texas, and the southeastern U.S. and Mexico. They prefer the heavier cover found around streams, forest edges and other areas with dense under story. In the fall they migrate south to Mexico, Panama and a number of Caribbean islands.

Now You Know!

- No other United States bird has red underparts and a blue head.
- Although primarily seed eaters, painted buntings rarely come to backyard feeders because they dislike being so far from cover.
- Even though painted buntings are fairly common birds in much of Texas they are rarely seen.
- When they are spotted, people often believe that they are an escaped tropical bird.
- Around sunup, males will briefly perch and sing on top of the brush they live in.

Life Cycle

Sexual maturity: Less than one year

Mating season: Spring and summer
Painted buntings usually nest 2 to 4 times a season.

Gestation: Eggs hatch in 11-12 days, young fledge 12-14 days after that.

No. of young: 3-5 usually 3-4. Pale bluish or grayish white eggs are mottled with reddish-brown spots towards the large end. The eggs are 8/10th of an inch long.

Legend Has It ...

Painted buntings are part of a genus including the gorgeous blue indigo and lazuli buntings. The Greek myth of Scylla who turned into the bird keiris, inspired the name ciris for the beautiful painted bunting. In several of his plays, Shakespeare referred to buntings as worthless birds, reflecting the attitude of the time. Despite this temporary reputation, buntings were prized as caged birds, served at banquets in Elizabethan times, and sport complimentary names meaning "charming" and "delightful."

Painted Buntings & Man

Male painted buntings have been used as caged birds in some areas due to their bright colors and beautiful voice.

