

PASSERIFORMES

(Songbirds)

Wrens



Family TROGLODYTIDAE (Wrens)

Cactus Wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*)



Red Rock Canyon NCA; NV



Dolan Springs; AZ



Antelope Canyon; Dolan Springs, Arizona



Dolan Springs; AZ



Dolan Springs; AZ

Measurements:

Length: 8" Wing Span: 11" Average Weight: 1.5 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

medium-large size; mottled brown upperparts, cinnamon belly with pale spots, and white breast with **patch of densely packed black spots**; long tail with black-and-white barring and white edges; long, black, decurved bill; dark red eyes (appear black in poorly lit conditions); long, bold, **white eyebrow**, **dark eyeline**; no sexual dimorphism

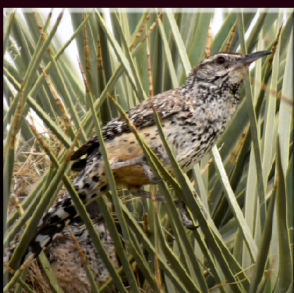
Notes:

common; solitary or in small family groups; native to desert habitats of the sw US (s CA east to TX) and n MEX; 7 subspecies; usually forages on the ground mainly for isects, some fruits; obtains most of its water from diet

Mojave presence: year-round

Comments:

These common wrens are the largest members of the family in the Mojave. While typically solitary birds (left), couples are seen together (right) during nesting season. Males share child-rearing duties, as seen here in a Joshua Tree nest at [Red Rock Canyon NCA](#) in June, 2019.



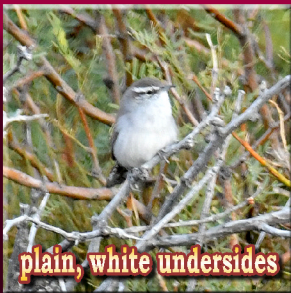
Family TROGLODYTIDAE (Wrens)

Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*)



brown upperparts

Red Rock Canyon NCA; NV



plain, white undersides

Corn Creek; Desert NWR, NV



subspecies T. b. eremophilus

Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve; Henderson, NV



bold, white eyebrow

Henderson BVP; NV



singing atop a Joshua

Dolan Springs; AZ

Measurements:

Length: 5" Wing Span: 7" Average Weight: .3 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

small size; plain grayish brown above, white below, and white undertail coverts with dark bars; long, barred tail tipped with white; grayish, slightly decurved bill; dark eyes with long, **bold white eyebrow**; no sexual dimorphism

Notes:

common locally; solitary/monogamous pairs; inhabits open woodlands, thickets, scrublands, deserts, prairies, etc., along w NA from sw BC south through Baja, and sc US from NV/UT east to MO/AR (extirpated from farther east), and south through c MEX; once ranged throughout most of NA; 13 extant subspecies; diet consists mainly of insects, spiders, etc. (plus seeds in winter), from which all if its water needs are fulfilled

Mojave presence: winter range; year-round in far ne region

Comments:

Several physical features help to distinguish the Bewick from other similar wrens in field observations. Of those with prominent eyebrows, this bird is distinctly smaller in size than a **Cactus Wren**, (page 2), and its brow is bolder and longer than that of the **Marsh Wren**. Also, the Bewick has plain brownish upperparts, whereas the Marsh has characteristic black-and-white barring on the neck and wings (page 5). The **Rock Wren** (page 4) is likewise small in stature, but its eyebrow is not so bold, its breast has **Ptr3** fine streaks, its belly is washed with pale rust, and its plumage is a paler gray-brown than the Bewick.

Family TROGLODYTIDAE (Wrens)

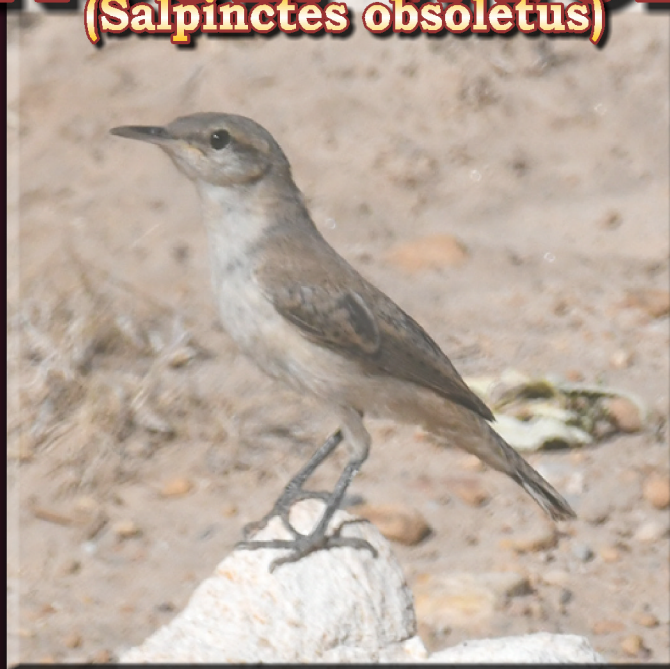
Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*)



West Rim; Grand Canyon; AZ



Willow Spring; RRCNCA; NV



Willow Spring; Red Rock Canyon NCA; Nevada



Ash Meadows NWR; NV



Overton WMA; Overton, NV

Measurements:

Length: 6" Wing Span: 9" Average Weight: .6 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

small size; gray to brown upperparts with **small flecks**, grayish underparts with fine streaks on breast, buffy rump and flanks, usually has white undertail coverts with dark bars; long, barred tail with buffy tip; long, gray, slightly decurved bill; dark eyes, pale to absent eyebrow, faint to dark eyeline; no sexual dimorphism

Notes:

common; solitary; prefers dry, rocky habitats with little vegetation in w NA from s CAN south through MEX, and CA/OR/WA east to Great Plains (rare farther east); only member of genus **Salpinctes**; bobbing habit while foraging on the ground for insects, spiders, scorpions, etc. (from which all if its water needs are fulfilled)

Mojave presence: year-round

Comments:

Unlike the very secretive **Marsh Wren**, these birds are much more conspicuous and easier to photograph, especially the habituated beggars and scroungers like these two at **Valley of Fire State Park** in Nevada in January (left) and April (right), 2018.



Family **TROGLODYTIDAE** (Wrens)

Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*)



Overton WMA; NV



Overton Wildlife Management Area; Overton, NV



Overton WMA; NV



Measurements:

Length: 5" Wing Span: 6" Average Weight: .4 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

small size; rufous back, shoulders, tail; paler below with white throat; **dark-and-light barring** on wings, back of neck; short tail with dark lateral bars; long, decurved bill; dark eyes, bold eyebrow, **dark eyeline**; no sexual dimorphism

Notes:

common locally; solitary; relegated to wetland areas with tall vegetation throughout most of the US, north into central CAN, wintering south through all of MEX; aka **Long-Billed Marsh Wren**; diet consists mainly of insects, but also arachnids, molluscs, etc.

Mojave presence: migratory; some year-round residents

Comments:

Marsh wrens are quite uncommon in the Mojave, restricted to--as their name implies--wetland areas. As such, good candidate locations should include **Bill Williams River NWR**, **Clark County Wetlands Park**, the **Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve**, and such urban parks as **Cornerstone** and **Sunset** in the Las Vegas valley. However, the only place and time I have ever seen a representative of this species was at the **Overton WMA** (above) in October, 2020! Even if common in such areas, these wrens are very secretive, preferring the cover of reeds and cattails, affording little opportunity to clearly view and photograph!