

THE VILLAGE BIRDING LIFE

“The Northern Mockingbird”

by HSV Audubon

Certainly Harper Lee had symbolism in mind when she titled To Kill a Mockingbird, but there's a good possibility her choice was influenced by a poor night's sleep. The Northern Mockingbird, the only mockingbird found in North America, is one of the few birds that sings both day and night. Lonely males, in fact, have been known to sing all night.

The Northern Mockingbird is a slender bird with a long tail and a vicious looking, slightly curved bill. They are grouped in the same family as a couple of other Arkansas birds- Brown Thrashers and Gray Catbirds. The male and female appear identical with drab white, black and gray coloration. Bright white wing patches seen in flight are a good ID marker. Although N. Mockingbirds might be found in any of the continental states, they are more common in the South. Even though they don't mind being around people and buildings Mockers seldom come to bird feeders. Their primary diet is insects and berries. Nesting is done in brushy areas, such as, hedge or fence rows. Mockingbird are quite aggressive in defending their territory from other birds.

Above all else, Mockingbirds are most notable because of their songs. So much that in the 1800s, they were so popular as caged birds that they became scarce in some Eastern states. What's unique about Mockingbirds is their remarkable ability to mimic and learn the songs of other birds which they combine into a jumble of short phrases that are repeated over and over. There are records of a single bird having over 200 song versions.

Nowadays with air conditioning and closed windows not many people lose sleep because of Mockingbirds. This makes the song of the Northern Mockingbird even easier to enjoy. Smell the roses and “listen up”.

As always HSVBIRDS.ORG has a lot of information about everything you'd like to know about birds and some of Nature's other wonders. You will see on the website, hsvbirds.org, that HSV Audubon has available a Village birding checklist. It lists the over 200 species of birds that might be seen in the Village, when they might be seen and how common they are. It's a great way to keep track of the birds at your feeder.

HSV Audubon meets the 2nd Friday of each month, except for July and August, at 10:00 at the Coronado Center. Guests are always welcome.

Photos by Vic Prislipsky