

Wings Over the Waves

Top 20 Birds to Spot in Ocean Beach, San Diego

Spring Migration Checklist – March–May 2026

Check off the birds you see at Famosa Slough, San Diego River/Dog Beach, or Sunset Cliffs!

Use this checklist to track your sightings during your Ocean Beach adventure. Dawn and low tide are prime times for shorebirds and waders. Respect wildlife—observe from trails and never feed birds. Happy birding!

#	Bird Name	Scientific Name	Best Viewing Tip / Location	✓
1	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	Watch for plunge dives at Dog Beach river mouth	
2	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Fishing in Famosa Slough shallows at dawn	
3	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Elegant wader in tidal channels	
4	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	Active foot-stirring in mudflats	
5	Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Nannopterum auritum</i>	Perched on rocks at Sunset Cliffs (wings spread to dry)	
6	Brandt's Cormorant	<i>Urile penicillatus</i>	Cliff roosts and group flights along Sunset Cliffs	
7	Western Gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>	Patrolling shores and piers	
8	Heermann's Gull	<i>Larus heermanni</i>	Chasing pelicans for food near the coast	
9	American Wigeon	<i>Mareca americana</i>	Grazing in wetland edges	
10	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Common in sloughs and river	
11	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	Wading in shallow mudflats	
12	Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>	Probing mud at river mouth (flashy wing pattern in flight)	

#	Bird Name	Scientific Name	Best Viewing Tip / Location	✓
13	Sanderling	Calidris alba	Chasing waves on Dog Beach	
14	Anna's Hummingbird	Calypte anna	Buzzing near coastal flowers and scrub	
15	Black Phoebe	Sayornis nigricans	Perched over water edges (tail pumping)	
16	California Towhee	Melospiza crissalis	Scratching in brush near cliffs	
17	Song Sparrow	Melospiza melodia	Melodic songs from marsh edges	
18	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Setophaga coronata	Flitting in trees and scrub ("butterbutt" yellow rump)	
19	Osprey	Pandion haliaetus	Soaring and diving over water	
20	Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus	Dramatic dives from Sunset Cliffs	

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Mention "**Wings Over the Waves**" for 15–25% off at Ocean Villa Inn, OB Hotel, or The Inn at Sunset Cliffs.

A portion of campaign profits supports local bird habitat preservation.

Birding Tips & Etiquette – Protect the Birds You Love

Section 1: Quick Birding Tips

- **Best Times:** Arrive at dawn (6–9 AM) or late afternoon (3–sunset) for active birds and beautiful light.
- **Tides Matter:** Check tide charts—low tide exposes mudflats at Dog Beach/river mouth (great for shorebirds); mid-to-high tide concentrates birds at Famosa Slough.
- **Gear Essentials:** Binoculars (8x42 or 10x42), camera with telephoto lens (100-400mm+), polarized sunglasses, sturdy shoes, water, and layers (coastal wind can be cool).
- **Apps to Use:** Merlin Bird ID (free, identifies by sound/photo), eBird (log sightings and see real-time reports).
- **Stay Safe:** Trails can be uneven or slippery—watch your step near cliffs and water edges.

Section 2: Birding Etiquette – Leave No Trace

- Keep a respectful distance (at least 25–50 feet) from birds, especially nesting or feeding ones.
- Never feed wildlife—it harms their health and natural behavior.
- Stay on designated trails to avoid disturbing nests or fragile habitat.
- Keep noise low and movement slow—sudden actions can flush birds.
- Leash dogs (Dog Beach allows them, but keep them under control near wildlife).
- Pick up litter—even small bits can harm birds and habitats.
- Report injured birds or illegal activity to local authorities (e.g., California Department of Fish & Wildlife).

Section 3: Why Your Visit Matters

Every sighting logged and every respectful visit helps protect Ocean Beach’s wetlands and cliffs. A portion of “Wings Over the Waves” campaign profits supports local habitat preservation through partners like Friends of Famosa Slough and San Diego Bird Alliance. Thank you for being part of the solution!

Personal Notes / Sightings Log

Date: _____ Location: _____ Weather: _____

Notes / Special sightings:

My favorite bird today: _____ Best photo moment: _____

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