

# White-crowned sparrow

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The **white-crowned sparrow** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) is a medium-sized sparrow native to North America.

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## Description

Adults are 18 cm (7 in) long and have black and white stripes on their head, a gray face, brown streaked upper parts and a long tail. The wings are brown with bars and the underparts are gray. Their bill is pink or yellow. They are similar in appearance to the white-throated sparrow but do not have the white throat markings.

## Subspecies

There are five currently recognized subspecies of white-crowned sparrow (*pugetensis*, *gambelii*, *nuttalli*, *oriantha*, and *leucophrys*), varying in breeding distribution migratory route. Birds of the subspecies *nuttalli* are permanent residents in California, while birds of the subspecies *gambelii* may migrate as far as the Arctic Circle during the summer breeding season. Northern birds migrate to the southern United States.

## Distribution

Their breeding habitat is brushy areas across northern Canada and the western United States.

The white-crowned sparrow is a very rare vagrant to western Europe.<sup>[2]</sup> It has been sighted in England, Scotland,<sup>[2][3]</sup> Ireland,<sup>[4]</sup> and Norway.<sup>[5]</sup>

### White-crowned sparrow



#### Conservation status



Least Concern (IUCN 3.1)<sup>[1]</sup>

#### Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Aves
Order:	Passeriformes
Family:	Emberizidae
Genus:	<i>Zonotrichia</i>
Species:	<i><b>Z. leucophrys</b></i>

#### Binomial name

***Zonotrichia leucophrys***

(Forster, 1772)



In California, United States

In 2008 a white-crowned sparrow was spotted in Cley next the Sea in Norfolk.<sup>[6]</sup> To commemorate the event an image of the bird was included in a window at St Margaret's Church.

## Behavior

These birds forage on the ground or in low vegetation, but sometimes make short flights to catch flying insects. They mainly eat seeds, other plant parts and insects. In winter, they often forage in flocks.

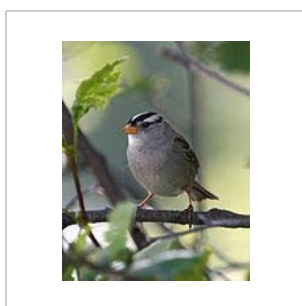
White-crowned sparrows nest either low in bushes or on the ground under shrubs and lay three to five brown-marked gray or greenish-blue eggs.

The white-crowned sparrow is known for its natural alertness mechanism, which allows it to stay awake for up to two weeks during migration.<sup>[7]</sup> This effect has been studied for possible human applications, such as shift-work drowsiness or truck driving.<sup>[8][9][10]</sup>

## Images



Depiction of a white-crowned sparrow in window in St Margaret's Church, Cley next the Sea, Norfolk.



Adult white-crowned sparrow



The juvenile (first winter) plumage is more muted than the adult



*nuttalli* subspecies specimen from Point Lobos State Reserve, California



Female white-crowned sparrow hunting for food on the ground. Owl Canyon on the western shore of Bodega Harbor, California

## See also

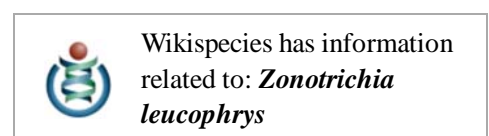
- Unihemispheric slow-wave sleep

## References

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  7. "It's Wake-Up Time" (<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.11/sleep.html>). Wired Website. 1 November 2003. Retrieved 28 July 2010.
  8. "Migratory Sleeplessness in the White-Crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*)" (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC449897>). *PLoS Biology* **2** (7): E212. 13 July 2004. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.0020212 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.1371%2Fjournal.pbio.0020212>). PMC 449897 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC449897>). PMID 15252455 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15252455>).
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  10. "Circadian and Masking Control of Migratory Restlessness in Gambel's White-Crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*)" (<http://jbr.sagepub.com/content/23/1/59.abstract>). *Journal of Biological Rhythms*. 1 February 2008. Retrieved 28 July 2010.
- Byers, Clive; Olsson, Urban; Curson, Jon. *Buntings and Sparrows*. ISBN 1-873403-19-4.

## External links

- White-crowned sparrow species account ([http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/White-crowned\\_Sparrow.html](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/White-crowned_Sparrow.html)) - Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- White-crowned sparrow - *Zonotrichia leucophrys* (<http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/id/framlst/i5540id.html>) - USGS Patuxent Bird Identification InfoCenter
- White-crowned sparrow videos, photos, and sounds (<http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/white-crowned-sparrow-zonotrichia-leucophrys>) at the Internet Bird Collection



- White-crowned sparrow photo gallery (<http://vireo.acnatsci.org/search.html?Form=Search&SEARCHBY=Common&KEYWORDS=White-crowned+Sparrow&showwhat=images&AGE=All&SEX=All&ACT=All&Search=Search&VIEW=All&ORIENTATION=All&RESULTS=24>) at VIREO (Drexel University)
- *Daily Mail* article about a white-crowned sparrow as an exotic visitor to the UK, now commemorated in a church window (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1330829/White-crowned-sparrow-immortalised-churchs-stained-glass-window-3-000-mile-flight-Atlantic.html>)
- Interactive range map of *Zonotrichia leucophrys* (<http://maps.iucnredlist.org/map.html?id=22721088>) at IUCN Red List maps (<http://maps.iucnredlist.org/index.html>)

## Books

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