



WESTERN TANAGER

September 2025 - Bird of the Month

Spotting a male Western Tanager as it flits through dense pine trees is both a challenge and a pure delight. The mid-sized songbird presents with a bright yellow body, black wings and an astonishing red head. The drabber female is duller, greenish yellow below with grayish back and wings.



Western Tanagers nest in high montane western forests of spruce, fir, and aspen and mid-elevation conifers. They are welcome migrants in the spring as they hurry north to their lofty breeding grounds extending into northern Canada. Their fall return is more leisurely as they head south to their warm overwintering grounds in Mexico and Central America.

We are excited to see them pausing in coastal Southern California to feed and build strength for their long, perilous spring and fall journeys.

During the breeding season, their diet consists mainly of insects to feed their growing young. In the fall and winter, they rely more on fruits and berries. The diverse flowering, fruit bearing trees and bushes in our neighborhood yards and tree-filled parks provide a welcome bounty for these colorful travelers.



Photos by James Kendall Written by Betty Kanne