American Dipper

Water Ouzel | *Cinclus mexicanus Swainson, 1827*



A LIFE ON THE RIVER

A singer of rapids *in the whitewater*

On mossy boulders in British Columbia's clear salmon streams, the American Dipper bobs, blinks, and slips into the current. North America's only truly aquatic songbird, it brings quick movement and quiet resilience to cold, fast water.

YEAR-ROUND ON MOUNTAIN STREAMS

Active in every season. In winter, many birds gather along lower ice-free rivers, then some move upstream in spring to breed on tributary streams.

COLD, CLEAR RIFFLES

It lives along swift, rock-bedded streams and rivers with cascades, cobbles, mossy boulders, and forested riparian cover.

A SENTINEL OF STREAM HEALTH

Protected under the Migratory Birds Convention Act. Clean water, natural streamflow, and healthy streamside habitat help sustain the insects and nesting sites this species needs.

FIELD NOTES

RECOGNIZE IT

Chunky and slate-grey, with a short cocked tail, pale legs, and a flashing white eyelid when it blinks.

UNDERWATER FORAGER

It dives, swims, and even walks underwater to catch caddisfly, stonefly, and mayfly larvae on the streambed.

WATCH WITH CARE

Observe from a respectful distance, especially near bridges, ledges, or waterfalls where active nests may be tucked above rushing water.

Sources: BC CDC; Birds of British Columbia; Bird Atlas BC; ECCC; Cornell Lab of Ornithology.