

# Bird Watching in your Pocket

By Dana Knepper, Exhibit Design Specialist



As Americans we are used to seeing the image of a fiercely proud American Eagle clutching a linen scroll in its powerful claws on the flip side of a 25¢ piece. Thanks to the US Mint's State Commemorative Coins series we can now see other birds on our quarter-of-a-dollar coins, thus allowing us to do a little bird watching in our pockets!

A surprisingly large number of states have chosen images of birds to represent the unique spirit of their state.

- The largest bird image is the Peregrine Falcon dominating the back of **Idaho's** commemorative coin, due out this month.
- **California**, perhaps a state that has more than its fair share of natural wonders, has a California Condor soaring though Yosemite Valley as part of its quarter.
- **Arkansas** has a Mallard Duck in an explosive lift-off from a lake.



- **Minnesota** has a much calmer Common Loon gliding over what one must assume is one of the ten thousand lakes in the center of the Gopher State.
- **Louisiana** shows an endangered Brown Pelican resting on a levee piling, while **South Dakota** sports an introduced species, the Chinese Ring-necked Pheasant, flying above Mt. Rushmore.
- **South Carolina's** coin appropriately bears the image of a Carolina Wren.
- The birds seen on the **Maine** coin are flying above a sailing ship too far away for proper identification, but they are clearly some kind of gull, or perhaps albatross or petrel.

Do you think the staff of the Pennsylvania Commonwealth statue seen on our quarter has a raptor perched on it, or is it just sporting a pair of wings?

As the new coins are released, take a little time to do some bird watching in your pocket. I'm betting there will be more birds to come.

*Coin photos by Michael Faix; colored coins courtesy of Debbie West.*

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