

Birds of Wisconsin – An Annotated Checklist

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This is a list of 429 species that have been found in Wisconsin during the past 150 years. A code following the name of each species gives information regarding the status of the species, including the relative abundance of the species in Wisconsin, and whether the species is a migrant, a breeding species, a permanent resident, or a winter resident. Some species are rare, and the following list of codes also denotes whether the species is rare but is found each year, or rare and has been seen only a few times. New species are occasionally seen in Wisconsin. Decisions regarding the inclusion of additional species to this list are made by the Records Committee of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

ABUNDANCE CODES:

a: abundant (very easy to find; very numerous and widespread)

c: common (easy to find in the appropriate habitat and season)

uc: uncommon (requires additional effort to find)

L*: species with localized distributions; found breeding in few areas of the state

r1: rare, but regular (seen somewhere in WI annually)

r2: casual (no more than one record every 1-5 years)

r3: accidental (less than one record every 5 years)

(Those species designated “r3” are considered vagrants. They do not necessarily fit into a category such as “migrant” or “winter resident”).

The abundance of a species can vary dramatically through the seasons. A given species can be abundant during migration, but rare during the breeding season. The abundance codes I have attached to the species on this list show a rather “average” value, for the sake of simplicity. This is very subjective, of course, and is based on my own experience and the use of various references, given at the end of this checklist.

RESIDENT OR MIGRANT CODES:

: breeds in WI; also found as a migrant. The asterisk is in parentheses if the species very rarely breeds in WI: (). (See above designation for species with very localized distributions; [L*]. Those species characterized as L* are regularly/annually found breeding in limited areas, whereas those species listed thus (*) are not found breeding in the state every year).

*PR: permanent resident; at least some individuals remain and are nonmigratory, though some may migrate.

M: migrant; seen in WI during migratory periods. (Some species are found during migration and during winter also).

WR: winter resident (Permanent residents are automatically considered winter residents). (Wintering species of course migrate into and out of the state).

E: endangered in WI (species in danger of extinction in our state)

T: threatened in WI (species with very limited population; possibly could become endangered)

Example: The Red-necked Grebe is listed as “L*T”, that is, it is found breeding in a few areas of the state regularly and annually; it is considered threatened in Wisconsin. The number of young produced each year is small.

The headings **in bold type** are **family** divisions. For scientific names of the families, genera, and species, consult the Taxonomic Checklist, also online at the WSO website at this link: http://www.wsobirds.org/wso_wisconsin_checklist1.html

This list can be used as a way to keep a life list or other lists. You have my permission to photocopy it, for personal use only.

A note of caution: These categories are not rigid. Some individuals of some species may be able to be described in a number of ways. For example, we might refer to the Bald Eagle as an uncommon breeding species, as well as a winter resident. Some of the individuals present here during winter have arrived here from breeding areas outside our borders, while some winter residents were fledged here. In addition, there continue to be numerous threats to the breeding population as well as to those individuals that winter here, which cause this species to have its “threatened” code, in spite of its designation as “uncommon”.

Some relatively common species are undergoing dramatic changes in status as a result of environmental and other factors. For example, while one would certainly describe the Great Blue Heron as a common bird in Wisconsin, some breeding colonies of

this species in this state are in decline. Many individuals we see are nonbreeders. The status of many bird species is thus in a state of flux, reflecting a changing environment and loss of habitat.

This list is the result of a combination of my own field experience, the use of the references listed below, and conversations with experienced ornithologists and birders. For the first and some subsequent editions of this list, I was influenced by conversations with John Idzikowski, Bob Domagalski, and the late Professor Charles M. Weise of the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I am indebted to them for advice regarding the status and distribution of bird species in our state. Additional comments provided by the following people greatly improved various versions of the manuscript, and I express my gratitude to them: Professor Bill Brooks of Ripon College, Noel Cutright, Jan Hansen and Tom Schultz. Any errors are of course my own responsibility. Recent name changes mandated by the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of North and Middle American Birds of the American Ornithologists' Union are used throughout. Previously used common names are in parentheses after the name now officially in use.

This February 2008 version of the list supersedes all previous versions.

Whistling-Ducks, Geese, Swans, Ducks

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck r3 (*) (one breeding record, 1999, with some unresolved questions?)

Fulvous Whistling-Duck r3

Greater White-fronted Goose ucM (more frequent in recent years)

Snow Goose cM (rareWR)

Ross's Goose r1M (more frequent in recent years)

Brant r2M

Cackling Goose ucM

Canada Goose a*M & WR (many more migrants than breeders; urban flocks in se WI are PR)

Mute Swan uc*PR

Trumpeter Swan r1*E (rareWR; at least a good percentage are PR) (reintroduction effort in progress for this once extirpated species) Tundra Swan cM (rareWR)

Wood Duck c*(rareWR)

Gadwall uc*(mostly a cM; rareWR)

Eurasian Wigeon r2M

American Wigeon c*(few breed; mostly M)

American Black Duck c*WR (very uc*; mostly a M)

Mallard a*WR

Blue-winged Teal c*(rareWR)

Cinnamon Teal r2M

Northern Shoveler c*(uc*; mostly a M)

Northern Pintail c*(mostly a M; few*)

Green-winged Teal c*(rare*; mostly a M; rareWR)

Canvasback cM (*) (rareWR)

Redhead c*(uc*; ucWR)

Ring-necked Duck c*(rare WR)

Greater Scaup cMWR

Lesser Scaup c (*)MWR

King Eider r2M&WR

Common Eider r3

Harlequin Duck r1M&WR (Now reliable on Lk. Michigan in winter)

Surf Scoter ucM on Lake Michigan, rare elsewhere; rare WR

White-winged Scoter ucM on Lake Michigan; rare elsewhere; rare WR

Black Scoter ucM, rare WR

Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw) ucMWR

Bufflehead c(*)MWR

Common Goldeneye cMWR(*)

Barrow's Goldeneye r2M&WR (recent annual records)

Smew r3

Hooded Merganser uc*(rareWR)

Common Merganser c*WR
Red-breasted Merganser c*WR (uc *)
Masked Duck r3 (19th century record)
Ruddy Duck c*WR (very uncommon winter resident)

Partridges, Pheasants, Grouse, Turkey, Quail

Gray Partridge uc*PR
Ring-necked Pheasant c*PR
Ruffed Grouse c*PR
Spruce Grouse L*PR
Willow Ptarmigan r3 (one 19th century record)
Sharp-tailed Grouse uc*PR
Greater Prairie-Chicken L*PRT
Wild Turkey c*PR
Northern Bobwhite uc*PR

Loons

Red-throated Loon ucM
Pacific Loon r2M (more frequent in recent years)
Common Loon c*(rare WR)

Grebes

Pied-billed Grebe c*(rareWR)
Horned Grebe cM (*) (few breeding records; mostly a migrant; rareWR)
Red-necked Grebe L*T
Eared Grebe r1M (*) (few breeding records; mostly a migrant)
Western Grebe (*) r1M

Pelicans

American White Pelican L* (a few recent breeding colonies)
Brown Pelican r3

Cormorants

Double-crested Cormorant c*

Darters

Anhinga r3

Frigatebirds

Magnificent Frigatebird r3

Bitterns, Herons

American Bittern c*
Least Bittern uc*
Great Blue Heron c*(rareWR)
Great Egret uc*T
Snowy Egret ucM; summer resident in Brown County, r1elsewhere (has bred * in Brown and Oconto counties)
Little Blue Heron r1M
Tricolored Heron r2M
Cattle Egret uc*
Green Heron c*
Black-crowned Night-Heron c*(rare in winter)
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron r1*T

Ibises, Spoonbills

White Ibis r3
Glossy Ibis r3M
White-faced Ibis r2M
Roseate Spoonbill r3 (19th century record)

Storks

Wood Stork r3

Vultures

Black Vulture r3
Turkey Vulture c*(rare WR)

Osprey, Kites, Eagles, Hawks

Osprey uc*T (a very few winter records)
Swallow-tailed Kite r3
White-tailed Kite (Black-shouldered Kite) r3
Mississippi Kite r2M
Bald Eagle uc*WRT
Northern Harrier c*WR (uncommon winter resident)
Sharp-shinned Hawk c*WR (uncommon winter resident)
Cooper's Hawk c*WR
Northern Goshawk uc*WR
Harris's Hawk r3
Red-shouldered Hawk uc*WRT
Broad-winged Hawk c*
Swainson's Hawk r1M
Red-tailed Hawk a*WR
Ferruginous Hawk r3M&WR
Rough-legged Hawk cM&WR
Golden Eagle ucMWR

Falcons

American Kestrel c*WR
Merlin uc*WR (rare in winter)
Gyr Falcon r2M&WR
Peregrine Falcon L*WRE

Rails, Gallinules, Coots

Yellow Rail L*
Black Rail r3
King Rail r1*
Virginia Rail c*WR (rare in winter)
Sora c*WR (rare in winter)
Purple Gallinule r3M
Common Moorhen (Common Gallinule) uc*
American Coot c*WR (uncommon in winter)

Cranes

Sandhill Crane c*
Whooping Crane r3 (one 20th century record, but reintroduction underway at Necedah NWR)

Plovers

Black-bellied Plover ucM

American Golden Plover ucM
Snowy Plover r3
Wilson's Plover r3
Semipalmated Plover ucM
Piping Plover L*E (rare breeding species on Lake Superior islands, missed entirely in some years; formerly also bred along Lk. Michigan shoreline)
Killdeer a*(rare in winter)

Stilts, Avocets

Black-necked Stilt mostly r2M (*first breeding record during 1999; most have been migrants)
American Avocet r1*(only one breeding record in 20th century; mostly a migrant)

Sandpipers

Greater Yellowlegs cM
Lesser Yellowlegs cM
Solitary Sandpiper cM
Willet ucM
Spotted Sandpiper c*
Upland Sandpiper uc*
Eskimo Curlew (r3; only one 20th century record, in 1903; species is extremely rare, may be near extinction)
Whimbrel uc or r1M (Locally uc along Lk. Michigan in May; rare otherwise)
Long-billed Curlew r3 (would fit in the r2M category except it has not been seen in WI since 1975)
Hudsonian Godwit ucM
Marbled Godwit ucM
Ruddy Turnstone ucM (locally c in eastern WI in spring)
Black Turnstone r3
Red Knot uc and r1M (more often seen along Great Lakes beaches; r1 elsewhere; rapid decline)
Sanderling cM
Semipalmated Sandpiper cM
Western Sandpiper r1M (questionable status; needs more study and documentation)
Least Sandpiper cM
White-rumped Sandpiper ucM
Baird's Sandpiper ucM
Pectoral Sandpiper cM
Purple Sandpiper r1M&WR
Dunlin cM
Curlew Sandpiper r3
Stilt Sandpiper ucM
Buff-breasted Sandpiper r1M
Ruff r2M
Short-billed Dowitcher cM
Long-billed Dowitcher ucM
Wilson's Snipe c*WR (rare in winter)
American Woodcock c*
Wilson's Phalarope uc*
Red-necked Phalarope ucM
Red Phalarope r2M

Gulls, Terns

Laughing Gull r1M (has become more regular in recent years)
Franklin's Gull ucM
Little Gull r1*(has not nested in WI in recent years)
Black-headed Gull r2M (very rare winter visitor)
Bonaparte's Gull cMWR(*) (formerly more numerous along Lk. Michigan in winter, now rarer in winter; 3 breeding records)
Black-tailed Gull r3

Mew Gull r2
Ring-billed Gull c*WR
California Gull r2
Herring Gull c*WR
Thayer's Gull ucWR
Iceland Gull r1WR
Lesser Black-backed Gull r1M&WR
Slaty-backed Gull r3
Glaucous-winged Gull r3
Glaucous Gull ucWR
Great Black-backed Gull uc(*)WR (becoming more common along Gr. Lakes)
Sabine's Gull r2M
Black-legged Kittiwake r2M&WR
Ross's Gull r3
Ivory Gull r2WR
Sooty Tern r3
Least Tern r2M
Caspian Tern uc*E (rare*)
Black Tern uc*
White-winged Tern r3
Common Tern uc*E (rare*)
Arctic Tern r2M
Forster's Tern uc*E (rare*)(L* as a breeder; summering individuals elsewhere)
Royal Tern r3

Jaegers

Pomarine Jaeger r2M
Parasitic Jaeger r1M
Long-tailed Jaeger r3

Alcids

Dovekie r3
Thick-billed Murre r3 (a specimen from the late 19th century)
Ancient Murrelet r3

Pigeons, Doves

Rock Dove a*PR
Band-tailed Pigeon r3
Eurasian Collared-Dove r2 (rapidly expanding range in N. America)
White-winged Dove r3
Mourning Dove a*WR
Passenger Pigeon (extinct; a common breeding species in WI prior to the 1870's)
Common Ground-Dove r3

Parrots

Carolina Parakeet (formerly an accidental species in WI; extinct since 1920)

Cuckoos, Anis

Yellow-billed Cuckoo uc*
Black-billed Cuckoo c*
Groove-billed Ani r3

Barn Owls

Barn Owl r2 (*) WRE

Owls

Eastern Screech-Owl uc*WR (PR in some parts of WI; some migrate)
Great Horned Owl c*PR
Snowy Owl ucWR
Northern Hawk Owl r2WR
Burrowing Owl r2M
Barred Owl c*PR
Great Gray Owl r1 (*)WR
Long-eared Owl uc*WR
Short-eared Owl uc(*)WR
Boreal Owl r2M&WR
Northern Saw-whet Owl uc*WR

Nightjars

Common Nighthawk c* (recent decline)
Chuck-will's-widow r2M (very rare summer resident; no evidence of breeding thus far)
Whip-poor-will c*(recent decline; not as widespread a breeder as formerly)

Swifts

Chimney Swift c*

Hummingbirds

Green Violet-ear r3
Green-breasted Mango r3
Broad-billed Hummingbird r3
Ruby-throated Hummingbird c*
Anna's Hummingbird r3
Rufous Hummingbird r2M

Kingfishers

Belted Kingfisher c*rareWR

Woodpeckers

Lewis's Woodpecker r3
Red-headed Woodpecker uc*WR
Red-bellied Woodpecker c*PR
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker c*WR
Downy Woodpecker c*PR
Hairy Woodpecker c*PR
Three-toed Woodpecker r2 vagrant &WR
Black-backed Woodpecker L*PR
Northern Flicker c*WR
Pileated Woodpecker uc*PR

Flycatchers

Olive-sided Flycatcher uc* (declining)
Western Wood-Pewee r3
Eastern Wood-Pewee c*
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher uc*
Acadian Flycatcher uc*T
Alder Flycatcher c*
Willow Flycatcher c*
Least Flycatcher c*
Dusky Flycatcher r3
Eastern Phoebe c* (very rare in early winter)

Say's Phoebe r3
Vermilion Flycatcher r3
Ash-throated Flycatcher r3
Great Crested Flycatcher c*
Western Kingbird r2 (*)
Eastern Kingbird c*
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher r2M
Fork-tailed Flycatcher r3

Shrikes

Loggerhead Shrike r1*E
Northern Shrike ucM&WR

Vireos

White-eyed Vireo L*(breeding status unclear)
Bell's Vireo L*T
Gray Vireo r3
Yellow-throated Vireo c*
Blue-headed (Solitary) Vireo uc*
Warbling Vireo c*
Philadelphia Vireo ucM (*) (a few rare breeding records)
Red-eyed Vireo a*

Jays, Crows

Gray Jay uc*PR (in northern WI only)
Blue Jay a*cWR
Clark's Nutcracker r3
Black-billed Magpie r3M&WR
American Crow a*WR
Common Raven uc*PR (mostly northern WI but expanding range, some recent breeding in central WI; rare migrant elsewhere)

Larks

Horned Lark c*WR

Swallows

Purple Martin c*
Tree Swallow a*
Northern Rough-winged Swallow uc or c*
Bank Swallow c*
Cliff Swallow c*
Cave Swallow r3
Barn Swallow a*

Chickadees, Titmice

Black-capped Chickadee a*WR (most are PR in some areas)
Boreal Chickadee uc*PR (some are rarely M)
Tufted Titmouse uc*PR

Nuthatches

Red-breasted Nuthatch uc*WR
White-breasted Nuthatch c*PR
Brown-headed Nuthatch r3

Creepers

Brown Creeper uc*WR

Wrens

Rock Wren r3
Carolina Wren r1 (*) (rarely a WR)
Bewick's Wren r3 (*) E
House Wren c*
Winter Wren uc*WR (rare in winter)
Sedge Wren c*
Marsh Wren c*

Kinglets

Golden-crowned Kinglet c*WR (c migrant, uc breeder, uc winter resident)
Ruby-crowned Kinglet c*WR (as above, except rare winter resident)

Gnatcatchers

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher uc*

Thrushes

Eastern Bluebird c*WR (uc in winter in s. WI)
Mountain Bluebird r2M&WR
Townsend's Solitaire r1M&WR
Veery c*
Gray-cheeked Thrush cM
Swainson's Thrush c*(uc breeder; c migrant)
Hermit Thrush c*
Wood Thrush c*
American Robin a*ucWR south, rare WR north
Varied Thrush ucWR

Mimic Thrushes

Gray Catbird c*(rare WR)
Northern Mockingbird r1 (*) WR
Sage Thrasher r3
Brown Thrasher c*(rare WR)
Curve-billed Thrasher r3

Starlings

European Starling a*WR

Pipits

American Pipit ucM

Waxwings

Bohemian Waxwing ucWR (irregular)
Cedar Waxwing c*WR

Silky-Flycatchers

Phainopepla r3

Warblers

Blue-winged Warbler uc*
Golden-winged Warbler uc*
Tennessee Warbler c* (few breeders; mostly a migrant)
Orange-crowned Warbler cM
Nashville Warbler c*

Northern Parula uc*
 Yellow Warbler a*
 Chestnut-sided Warbler c*
 Magnolia Warbler c* (uc *)
 Cape May Warbler uc*
 Black-throated Blue Warbler uc*
 Yellow-rumped Warbler c*(a few WR)
 Black-throated Gray Warbler r3
 Black-throated Green Warbler c*
 Townsend's Warbler r3
 Hermit Warbler r3
 Blackburnian Warbler c* (uc *)
 Yellow-throated Warbler r1*E
 Pine Warbler uc*
 Kirtland's Warbler r2 (*) and very rare M (first confirmed breeding in summer of 2007)
 Prairie Warbler r1M
 Palm Warbler c* (uc *)
 Bay-breasted Warbler cM (possible breeding in n. WI)
 Blackpoll Warbler cM
 Cerulean Warbler uc*T (uc and declining* in WI)
 Black & White Warbler c*
 American Redstart c*
 Prothonotary Warbler uc*
 Worm-eating Warbler L*E
 Swainson's Warbler r3
 Ovenbird a*
 Northern Waterthrush c*
 Louisiana Waterthrush uc*
 Kentucky Warbler uc*
 Connecticut Warbler uc*
 Mourning Warbler c*
 MacGillivray's Warbler r3
 Common Yellowthroat a*
 Hooded Warbler uc*T
 Wilson's Warbler c (*) (mostly a migrant; rare*)
 Canada Warbler uc*
 Yellow-breasted Chat r1*

Tanagers

Summer Tanager r1M
 Scarlet Tanager c*
 Western Tanager r2 (*) (only one breeding record, in 1877)

Sparrows

Green-tailed Towhee r2M&WR
 Spotted Towhee r2M
 Eastern Towhee (Rufous-sided Towhee) c*(rareWR)
 Rufous-crowned Sparrow r3M
 American Tree Sparrow aM&WR
 Chipping Sparrow a*(rareWR)
 Clay-colored Sparrow c*
 Field Sparrow c*(rare WR)
 Vesper Sparrow c*(rare WR)
 Lark Sparrow uc*
 Black-throated Sparrow r3

Lark Bunting r2M
Savannah Sparrow c*(rareWR)
Grasshopper Sparrow uc*
Baird's Sparrow r3
Henslow's Sparrow uc*(scarce* in recent years, but recovery in evidence on some managed grasslands and Conservation Reserve Program lands)
LeConte's Sparrow uc*
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow L* (questionable breeding status; very few areas?)
Fox Sparrow cM(rareWR)
Song Sparrow a*(ucWR)
Lincoln's Sparrow uc*
Swamp Sparrow c*(ucWR)
White-throated Sparrow a*(abundant migrant; c*; ucWR)
Harris's Sparrow ucM(rareWR)
White-crowned Sparrow cM(rareWR)
Golden-crowned Sparrow r3
Dark-eyed Junco a*(abundant M&WR; uc*)(most individuals in WI are the "Slate-colored" race)
Lapland Longspur cM&ucWR
Smith's Longspur r3
Chestnut-collared Longspur r3
Snow Bunting cM&WR

Cardinal -Grosbeaks

Northern Cardinal aPR*
Rose-breasted Grosbeak c*(rareWR)
Black-headed Grosbeak r3 M&WR
Blue Grosbeak r2 (*)(mostly a rare M)
Lazuli Bunting r3
Indigo Bunting c*
Painted Bunting r3M
Dickcissel c*(most years now only a uc*)

Blackbirds

Bobolink c*(becoming less common)
Red-winged Blackbird a*(ucWR)
Eastern Meadowlark c*(rareWR)
Western Meadowlark uc*(rareWR)
Yellow-headed Blackbird uc*(rare WR)
Rusty Blackbird cM(*) (a single recent breeding record; rareWR; rapid decline)
Brewer's Blackbird c*(rareWR)
Common Grackle a*(ucWR)
Great-tailed Grackle r3
Brown-headed Cowbird a*(ucWR)
Orchard Oriole uc*
Baltimore Oriole c*(a few very rare winter observations)
Bullock's Oriole r3
Scott's Oriole r3

Finches

Brambling r3
Gray-crowned Rosy Finch r3
Pine Grosbeak uc(*) (mostly a M&WR)
Purple Finch c*WR
House Finch c*WR
Red Crossbill ucM&WR; (*)(irregular)

White-winged Crossbill r1-to-uc M&WR(irregular)
Common Redpoll c-to-uc M&WR
Hoary Redpoll r1M&WR
Pine Siskin c-to-uc*WR
American Goldfinch a*WR
Evening Grosbeak c*(uc*; cM&WR)

Old World Sparrows

House Sparrow a*PR
Eurasian Tree Sparrow r3

Two additional categories are now included. The WSO Records Committee has evaluated records of several species for which written documentation was accepted, but for which origin is in dispute. A list of Hypothetical Species also is included below.

Species of Disputed Origin

These include Mexican Jay (r3- photos and multiple sight records of one individual), Pyrrhuloxia (r3 - videotape and multiple sight records of one individual), and Streak-backed Oriole (r3 - specimen of one individual). I have not included these species in the sections above, due to these unusual circumstances. As possible patterns of vagrancy are established in future years, new information and records may provide a clearer picture of these species' status.

Hypothetical Species

Hypothetical species are those for which documentation does not include photographs or specimens, or multiple sight records by different observers. Species in this category include the following:

Clark's Grebe
Prairie Falcon
Spotted Redshank
Roseate Tern
Long-billed Murrelet
Cassin's Kingbird
Yellow-browed Warbler
Northern Wheatear
Sprague's Pipit
Painted Redstart
Lesser Goldfinch

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