

Birds are Back Celebrity Challenge – Species Information

1. Common Loon

Bird Type: Diver

Habitat Information: Winters on coast, move inland as ice leaves lakes

Nesting Information: Cup on secluded lakeshore

Conservation Status: Sensitive

Spotting Tips: Listen for haunting song around lakes

Interesting Facts: Level of mercury in blood of loons in Kejimikujik Park is highest in North America; sources are soil and airborne pollution.

Wintering Grounds: Along coast from Newfoundland to Mexico

2. Common Merganser

Bird Type: Duck

Habitat Information: Winters on rivers and coast, breeds on rivers and lakes

Nesting Information: In tree cavities or on ground

Conservation Status: Secure

Interesting Facts: Bill is serrated to grip slippery prey such as fish

Wintering Grounds: Southern Canada and US, and along the coast

3. Peregrine Falcon

Bird Type: Raptor

Nesting Information: On cliff ledges or tall buildings

Conservation Status: N.S. Species at Risk-Vulnerable

Spotting Tips: Increasingly common along Bay of Fundy and downtown Halifax

Interesting Facts: World's fastest animal, 300kph; conservation success story

Wintering Grounds: Southern Canada southward to South America

4. Osprey

Bird Type: Raptor

Habitat Information: Lake, river, coast

Nesting Information: Platform in tree or on post

Conservation Status: Sensitive

Spotting Tips: Look up and listen for loud, high pitch 'chirping' call

Interesting Facts: Winters as far south as Argentina

Wintering Grounds: Southern US to South America

5. Common Tern

Bird Type: Gull

Habitat Information: Coast and sometimes lakes

Nesting Information: Scrape on ground, sometimes with lining; nest in colonies

Conservation Status: Vulnerable

Spotting Tips: Sometimes referred to as mackerel gulls; listen for their harsh call

Interesting Facts: Drinks saltwater and excretes salt from salt glands at base of beak

Wintering Grounds: Subtropical and tropical oceans

6. Piping Plover

Bird Type: Shorebird

Habitat Information: Beaches

Nesting Information: Eggs laid on open sand

Conservation Status: N.S. Species at Risk-Endangered

Spotting Tips: Please contact Sue Abbott at Bird Studies Canada (426-4055) before trying to see this bird

Interesting Facts: Only about 40 breeding pairs remain in Nova Scotia

Wintering Grounds: Atlantic and Gulf coasts of US to Mexico

7. Willet

Bird Type: Shorebird

Habitat Information: Salt marsh, mud flat

Nesting Information: Open cup in dense, low plants

Conservation Status: Secure/Vulnerable

Spotting Tips: Listen for loud, noisy call--pill-will-willet

Interesting Facts: If you come close to their nest or young, these loud, noisy birds will let you know

Wintering Grounds: Along both coasts from mid US to South America

8. Black Guillemot

Bird Type: Alcid

Habitat Information: Rocky shores and cliffs along the coast

Nesting Information: Lay eggs on rocky ledges near water

Conservation Status: Secure

Spotting Tips: Look for breeding colonies or for stragglers along coast; smaller than the smallest duck

Interesting Facts: Can stay underwater for 2 minutes and 20 seconds

Wintering Grounds: Close to breeding grounds, move to open water if necessary

9. Pileated Woodpecker

Bird Type: Woodpecker

Habitat Information: Mature forest and large trees

Nesting Information: In tree cavities

Conservation Status: Secure

Spotting Tips: Has loud call like a flicker and slow wingbeats when in flight

Interesting Facts: Largest woodpecker in North America; makes rectangular holes

Wintering Grounds: Southern Canada, Pacific coast, Central and eastern US

10. Northern Raven

Bird Type: Songbird

Habitat Information: Mostly prefer wooded areas, with large expanses of open land nearby

Nesting Information: Deep bowl made of large sticks and twigs, bound with an inner layer of roots, mud, and bark and lined with a softer material, such as deer fur

Conservation Status: Secure

Spotting Tips: Similar to crow but bigger with larger beak, a shaggy throat, and a wedge-shaped tail

Interesting Facts: Engage in aerial acrobatics: recorded flying upside down for 1 km; lifespan of up to 40 years; mate for life

Wintering Grounds: Does not migrate, but individual birds roam

11. American Robin

Bird Type: Songbird

Habitat Information: Backyards, parks and forests

Nesting Information: Mud cup on tree branch

Conservation Status: Secure

Spotting Tips: Listen for melodius song in tree-full yards

Interesting Facts: Along with worms, feeds on fruit, particularly in winter; fruit bird feeders are available

Wintering Grounds: South of Canada through Central America

12. American Goldfinch

Bird Type: Songbird

Habitat Information: Backyards, parks and open areas

Nesting Information: Open cup in shrub or tree

Conservation Status: Secure

Spotting Tips: Canary-yellow male; travels in flocks; common visitor to feeders

Interesting Facts: Late breeder, perhaps so that hatch of young corresponds with availability of grass and thistle seeds

Wintering Grounds: Canada-US border through Central America

13. Canada Warbler

Bird Type: Songbird

Habitat Information: Woodlands

Nesting Information: On ground among upturned stumps

Conservation Status: Cdn. Species at Risk-Threatened

Spotting Tips: One of the last warblers to arrive

Wintering Grounds: N. South America

14. Barn Swallow

Bird Type: Songbird

Habitat Information: In close proximity to humans

Nesting Information: Cup nest from mud pellets in barns or similar structures

Conservation Status: Vulnerable

Spotting Tips: Look for them perched on telephone wires; only swallow with forked tail

Interesting Facts: Winters in lowlands of Central and South America; catches insects in flight

Wintering Grounds: Southern Mexico through South America

15. Red Winged Blackbird

Bird Type: Songbird

Habitat Information: Freshwater marshes

Nesting Information: An open cup woven between several stems often over water

Conservation Status: Secure/Vulnerable

Spotting Tips: Male all black with red shoulder and yellow wing bar; female nondescript dark brown and smaller than males
Interesting Facts: Polygamous: one male can have up to 15 females nesting in his territory (but young may be sired by neighbouring males)
Wintering Grounds: Mexico and southern US

16. White Throated Sparrow

Bird Type: Songbird
Habitat Information: Deciduous or mixed forest
Nesting Information: On the ground under shrubs or low in trees
Conservation Status: Secure/Vulnerable
Spotting Tips: Seen around bird feeders in early spring; listen for distinctive song
Interesting Facts: Come in two colour forms: white and tan-crowned
Wintering Grounds: Southern and eastern US

17. Cedar Waxwing

Bird Type: Songbird
Habitat Information: Trees at the edge of wooded areas and open wooded areas
Nesting Information: Loose, open cup built with grass and twigs, supported by a tree branch
Conservation Status: Secure
Spotting Tips: Listen for wheezy call; travels in flocks
Interesting Facts: The name waxwing comes from the 'waxy' red tips on some of the tail feathers. During courtship the male and female will sit together and pass small objects back and forth
Wintering Grounds: Southern US to northern South America

18. Yellow Warbler

Bird Type: Songbird
Habitat Information: Deciduous thickets, parkland, and old fields
Nesting Information: Open cup in trees
Conservation Status: Secure
Spotting Tips: Males greener above and bright yellow below with orange streaks on breast
Interesting Facts: The Brown-headed Cowbird will often lay its eggs in the nest of yellow warbler; warbler may build another nest over the first one in response
Wintering Grounds: Central and South America

19. Red Eyed Vireo

Bird Type: Songbird
Habitat Information: Open wooded areas
Nesting Information: Cup suspended from forked branch
Conservation Status: Secure
Spotting Tips: Easily heard, harder to see; sings continuously; song a broken series of slurred notes
Interesting Facts: Population is stable or increasing
Wintering Grounds: Northern South America and Amazon basin

20. Gray Catbird

Bird Type: Songbird

Habitat Information: Dense, shrubby habitats along edges of fields and roads

Nesting Information: A bulky cup made of twigs and other material

Conservation Status: Secure/Vulnerable

Spotting Tips: A secretive bird, first heard rather than seen. Along with a rambling song, has a call rather like that of a cat.

Interesting Facts: Song contains imitations of other birds

Wintering Grounds: SE US, Central America, and Caribbean

Bonus Bird: Savannah (Ipswich) Sparrow

Bird Type: Songbird

Habitat Information: Coastal marram grass communities

Nesting Information: Breeds only on Sable Island. Nest is made of grasses on the ground.

Conservation Status: Vulnerable

Spotting Tips: Beaches on Eastern Shore in April while on migration to Sable Island

Interesting Facts: Ten percent larger than other savannah sparrows. Strong tendency to return each year to same spot on Sable Island

Wintering Grounds: Sand dunes along the Atlantic coast of the US south to Florida

**This information was obtained from many sources including http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Red-eyed_Vireo_dtl.html and from Dr. Ian McLaren and Sue Abbott. Any errors are those of EAC.*

***The Canadian and Nova Scotia Governments both have endangered species acts and some birds species are legally listed under one or both of these acts because they are threatened with extinction. In addition, the N.S. Government has provided all species with a conservation listing (no legal status)—see <http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/genstatus/>*